

Backgrounder

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Capital Regional District – Attitudes towards operation of new sewage treatment



The Environics Research Group conducted 400 telephone interviews with residents 18 years of age and over in seven municipalities in the Capital Regional District (Victoria, Sannich, Oak Bay, Langford, Colwood, Esquimalt and View Royal) from January 4 to 11, 2007. The topic of the survey was primarily new sewage treatment to serve the CRD. A survey of this magnitude yields results that are considered accurate to within plus or minus 5.0 per cent, 19 times out of 20. The survey was commissioned by the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Sewage treatment should be operated by regional district, not private corporations.

Residents were asked the following question: *“The regional district has been directed by the provincial government to develop a new sewage treatment plan. Who would you trust more to operate a new sewage treatment facility, a private corporation or the regional district? Would you trust [a private corporation/the regional district] a lot more or just a little more?”*

Residents of the Capital Regional District overwhelmingly trust the CRD more than a private corporation to operate a new sewage treatment facility. Three out of four CRD residents (76%) trust the regional district a lot (50%) or a little (26%) more, compared to just 16 per cent who would trust a private corporation a lot (7%) or a little (9%) more.

Residents were asked for the main reasons given for trusting the regional district or private corporations more. The main reasons for trusting the regional district are that it is not for profit (39%), public interests are better served (22%), more accountability (19%), and would be done locally (9%).

Homelessness and sewage treatment are the most important local issues.

When asked what they consider to be the most important local issue facing the Capital Region today, sewage treatment is the most important issue for 12 per cent of residents, ranking second only to the issue of homelessness, which is the top issue for 20 per cent of residents. Sewage treatment ranked ahead of housing prices (9%), traffic congestion (7%), health care (7%) and other issues.

Sewage treatment tops the list of the most important local environmental issues.

Issues related to sewage treatment are at the top of the agenda when CRD residents are asked what they consider to be the single most important environmental issue facing their community today. One-third (32%) identifies either sewage treatment (19%) or raw sewage going into the ocean (13%) as the most important environmental issue. Global warming ranks second (13%), followed by a variety of other issues including air quality, pollution and vehicle emissions.

Sewage treatment is a high priority.

Residents were asked, *“Do you think that building a new sewage treatment facility to serve the Capital Region should be a high priority, a medium priority or a low priority for the regional district?”*

Six in ten (61%) CRD residents think that building a new sewage treatment facility to serve the Capital Region should be a high priority. Another 28 per cent think it should be a medium priority and 10 per cent think it should be a low priority.

Environmental and financial concerns should be the main considerations for elected officials.

Residents were asked what they think is the most important thing elected officials should be thinking about when they decide how a new sewage treatment facility will operate. The most frequent responses are environmental standards and safety (21%) and saving money (18%). Other considerations include efficiency and effectiveness, longevity and long-term sustainability, issues related to an accountable process, innovative technology, location and number of facilities, and getting it done quickly.

Resource recovery programs are a priority.

Residents were asked whether a model of “resource recovery” should be part of sewage treatment as a priority for the CRD. They were given the example of the city of Vernon, which reuses its wastewater for agriculture, golf courses and other uses as part of its sewage treatment process. Over six in ten (62%) think it should be a high priority for the regional district to bring in this kind of resource recovery in the CRD. Another 24 per cent think this should be a medium priority and just 11 per cent think it should be a low priority.

Residents think it is unfair for the Campbell government to force privatization of sewage treatment.

Residents were asked *“Premier Campbell has said that the BC government will pay one-third of the capital cost of sewage treatment in the capital regional district, but only if the region agrees to consider having the sewage treatment run by private corporations. Do you think this policy is fair or unfair to residents and taxpayers of the regional district?”*

Seven in ten (71%) consider this to be unfair to the residents and taxpayers of the CRD compared to just 24 per cent who think it is fair.

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