



**REPORT TO CORE AREA LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2008**

SUBJECT **PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION UPDATE – CORE AREA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROJECT**

PURPOSE

To update the Core Area Liquid Waste Management Committee (CALWMC) on upcoming activities supporting the public education and participation components of the wastewater treatment project.

SUMMARY

Public Education and Outreach:

- A paid media campaign
- A series of informational open houses in seven communities starting in early April
- An earned media campaign
- The public education backgrounder is attached (Appendix A). A media plan is available upon request.

Public Participation and Engagement:

- This will be part of a workshop on 28 March 2009 with CALWMC
- Two thematic streams of public participation and engagement include community dialogue and community based workshops.
- A detailed report will be submitted to the CALWMC meeting of 08 April 2009.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Core Area Liquid Waste Management Committee receives this report for information.

Andy Orr
Senior Manager, Corporate Communications

Janette Loveys
Manager of Visitor Services / Community Development

Dwayne Kalynchuk, PEng
Project Director, Wastewater Treatment Project
Concurrence

COMMENTS

AO/JL:ta
Attachment: 1

PUBLIC EDUCATION – WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROJECT

Purpose

The purpose of the public education initiative of the core area wastewater treatment project is to inform the residents and stakeholders of the capital region about the progress of the project, by providing basic background information, with a focus on general resident education. Education will cover specific wastewater topics, the process to date and next steps, building upon previous communication activities and materials.

Background

The Capital Regional District (CRD) provides wastewater management to residential, commercial and industrial customers throughout the core area and west shore communities within the capital region. The area encompasses a population of approximately 250,000 people. The wastewater system is operated under the core area Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) approved by the Province, which includes key features such as a source control program, an inflow and infiltration program, preliminary treatment process, and effluent disposal. In July 2006, the minister of the environment requested the CRD to provide an amendment to the LWMP detailing a fixed schedule for the provision of wastewater treatment. As a result, the CRD embarked on an important and publicly controversial project of determining the most economically, socially and environmentally responsible approach to infrastructure creation of secondary wastewater treatment in the capital region.

It was identified early on that to support this project, two-way communications would play a key role in the public education and participation of residents and stakeholders within the region. In 2007, a preliminary communications plan was enacted for the launch of public engagement around this project. Over the next two years, in support of this plan, several communications tactics were employed— a research survey, direct mail, regional mall tours, feedback forms, a frequently asked questions brochure, newspaper advertising, active media relations and the creation of a project specific website— to support and inform about the developments of the wastewater project. Due to technological developments surrounding integrated resource management, and reporting provided by the provincial government, additional time was devoted by program staff and consultants to ensure that all viable integrated resource management approaches were considered and evaluated.

As a result we are preparing to launch a comprehensive education campaign in March 2009 to inform the public in the core area municipalities about the three proposed distributed wastewater management options, their estimated costs and benefits, and next steps. Following this campaign, in the spring and summer of 2009, public participation will become a priority to ensure the active engagement of residents and stakeholders in the region.

This document will serve as a guiding plan for ensuring consistent messaging, outlining objectives and guiding strategic and tactical delivery.

Target Audiences

- Residents of the CRD core area municipalities
- Communities where treatment plants may be sited
- Community and stakeholder groups
- Environmental groups
- First Nations
- Local businesses
- Government agencies

Communications Objectives

- Inform the public of the role of the CRD and process of the project
- Ensure the public is proactively informed and educated about treatment methods, options and related costs
- Ensure that effective communication plans and feedback loops are implemented
- Effectively manage issues as they arise

Key Messages

- Sustainability is our goal for the future. Environmental protection is important for all of us.
- We are committed to finding the best wastewater treatment option for the region and we need public input to achieve this.
- We are listening to the public and stakeholders.
- We are evaluating technical, social, environmental and financial issues.
- We will provide value to the taxpayer.

Cautionary Points

It is important to note that the communications tools and timelines will be primarily determined by the access and timing of information generated from program staff and consultants. If information sharing or project timelines are delayed in any way, this will have an immediate impact on the ability to create and deliver education and/or communications materials.

Public Education Campaign Strategies

In 2009, there will be significant public education on the wastewater treatment project to inform, educate and prepare CRD residents for meaningful consultation on site selection. Public education in the form of paid and earned media will be ongoing through 2009, with increased frequency around public participation activities.

Phase 2 of the education and participation plan will take place from March to May 2009 and will utilize a combination of communications strategies, including a paid and earned media campaign. The focus will be on obtaining public feedback about the triple bottom line factors they most value in the decision-making process. The Phase 2 of the Education campaign will focus on:

- Why the project is looking at resource recovery
- What it has discovered about potential resource recovery
- The three distributed wastewater management options

This plan will drive the public to the website, the CRD wastewater hotline and/or community open houses for more information. Open houses will be used to inform the public of the project to date and of this year's decision making process and will provide opportunity to contribute opinions and ideas to this year's process as a variety of feedback mechanisms will be employed to survey the public at open houses and online.

The paid media campaign will include print and radio advertising to increase general awareness of the project and a special newspaper insert will encourage feedback at open houses. The earned media campaign will support the paid campaign to increase participation at open houses.