



# CLEAR FACTS ON WASTEWATER

## #VILLAGE UPGRADES



## Cumberland Wastewater Upgrade – Referendum – FAQs

On Oct. 20, residents of Cumberland will be asked whether they support the Village borrowing up to \$4.4 million to construct upgrades to their wastewater system, which does not currently meet provincial standards. Below are some frequently asked questions about the referendum and the project.

### Wastewater treatment in Cumberland

#### Q. Why does Cumberland need to upgrade its wastewater treatment?

A. The Village's wastewater treatment does not comply with Ministry of Environment regulations and the Village has received enforcement notices from the Ministry in 2017 and 2018, including warnings about possible fines. Cumberland needs to develop an environmentally sustainable method of treating the liquid waste that is produced by the Village.

#### Q. How is Cumberland's sewage currently treated?

A. The community's current treatment uses lagoon aeration and settling and the non-disinfected effluent is discharged to Maple Lake Creek and then flows to the Trent River and into Baynes Sound. This effluent does not meet current regulatory standards for discharge to a freshwater receiving environment. During the summer period, when the only flow in Maple Lake Creek is the effluent water, the risk to human health and the downstream environment is at its greatest.

#### Q. What happens if the wastewater treatment isn't upgraded?

A. The current method of treatment for Cumberland's liquid waste cannot continue, as it is not environmentally sound. As well, the province has advised that it could begin issuing significant fines to the Village if upgrades aren't undertaken. The outcome of this process is still pending, but further action will be taken if the Village does not make the necessary upgrades to come into compliance. As well, the longer the upgrade is delayed, the higher the costs to undertake it will be.

#### Q. How would Cumberland's sewage be treated after the upgrade?

A. The proposed improvements include increasing the lagoon aeration capacity, phosphorus removal, use of a "fish friendly" disinfectant, and then 'polishing' treated water to remove organic contaminants such as pharmaceuticals. This treated water would then be distributed to the natural wetlands north of the lagoon and then continue to the Maple Lake Creek watershed. This would restore natural summer "wet" conditions to this drained wetland and facilitate habitat restoration of the area. The system as proposed will meet the regulatory requirements and provide capacity for Cumberland's growth for the next 20 years.

#### Q. How much would it cost to upgrade Cumberland's wastewater treatment?

A. The projected cost is \$9.7 million for the entire project. The Village is proposing borrowing \$1.2M to \$4.4M, depending on whether outside grant funding is received. The \$4.4M maximum would allow for the most critical upgrades to be completed regardless of whether the Village is successful in receiving grant funding – thereby avoiding potential penalties from the provincial government. Any successful grant applications will reduce the total borrowing required. It's expected that results of grant applications will be known by mid-2019.





## Wastewater Referendum, Oct. 20, 2018

### Q. Why does there have to be a vote on this?

A. Council needs approval by the electorate (voters) in Cumberland to approve a bylaw that allows them to borrow funds for this work. They are seeking this approval by a referendum vote.

### Q. Didn't Cumberland residents already vote on this?

A. An alternative approval process (AAP) was pursued in August 2018 for approval to borrow up to \$4.4M, and it was defeated. Because AAPs only require 10 per cent opposition to be defeated, local governments have the option to move to a referendum to seek wider input. Because Cumberland is still out of regulatory compliance for its wastewater treatment, council decided that it would seek the opinion of the wider electorate via referendum.

### Q. When is the referendum vote?

A. The question will appear on the ballot at the local government elections, held Saturday October 20. When you vote for your local council, you will be able to vote on the referendum at the same time.

### Q. How much will this cost me if the vote is passed?

A. The amount of federal and/or provincial grants received will determine how much the Village needs to borrow, and how much it will cost residents. It's estimated that with both federal and provincial grants in place, the total increase per property/per year would be \$310 and with no grant funding it would be as high as \$449 per year. This cost includes BOTH the capital cost and the new operating costs.

Once the 20-year borrowing period is completed, it's estimated ongoing operations costs for the new sewer treatment system would be between \$230-250/year over and above the current sewer fee. Current sewer fees for residents is roughly \$386/year.

### Q. Has the Village been putting any money aside along the way for this project?

A. To reduce the financial burden of upgrading the wastewater treatment system, the Village has been charging development cost charges (DCCs) – fees from new developments – and also saving through taxes since 2016. The amount available from these funds are \$748,000 from DCCs and \$485,000 from reserves, totaling \$1.233 million. These funds will continue to grow between now and when the debt will need to start being repaid (2021) – by between \$400,000-\$700,000 – which will also decrease the charges required to pay back the capital on the project. Along with these funds, the Village is also applying for grants to assist with the construction.

### Q. What happens if the vote doesn't pass?

A. The way Cumberland treats its liquid waste will still have to change. Immediate wastewater treatment upgrades are needed to meet the current permit and federal effluent requirements. Additional upgrades are required to meet the future requirements of the BC Municipal Wastewater Regulation and to add capacity for future Village growth. Without elector approval to borrow funds, the Village would remain out of compliance with its Wastewater Discharge Permit and could face heavy fines from the provincial government. The Village would continue to seek funding opportunities, but it's not known when the next opportunity might be available.

## Questions?

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