

# UBCM MEMBER NOTICE

**TO: Administrators  
Council & Board**

**FROM:** Jared Wright, Senior Policy Analyst

**DATE:** July 23, 2007

**RE: SEWERAGE SYSTEM REGULATION: UPDATE**

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The legislation governing the activities surrounding on-site sewage disposal systems in British Columbia changed on May 31, 2005 from the Sewage Disposal Regulation to the Sewerage System Regulation (SSR). The change marked the departure from a very prescriptive regulation to an outcome-based, industry accountable, administrative regulation.

The Sewerage System Regulation has raised implementation challenges for several local governments throughout the province. From increased costs to homeowners, to a lack of flexibility in septic system installations, to liability issues, to an absence of qualified practitioners and professionals, local governments have increasingly voiced concerns over the Regulation.

UBCM has been actively working with the Regulation's implementing agencies over the past year and a half to identify and address implementation challenges, and minimize the impact of the SSR. As part of its advocacy efforts, UBCM distributed a survey that was designed to assess local government implementation experiences with the SSR, as well as to identify specific issues and potential solutions for ameliorating the problems caused by the SSR. Overall, the survey results demonstrated that there was a lack of support for the key principles of the SSR, and that the Regulation has caused implementation problems province-wide.

In order to elevate discussions on the SSR, the UBCM Executive also approved the establishment of a working group of regional districts to review the implementation of the Regulation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community Services. The UBCM Sewerage System Regulation working group was recently struck, with a mandate to review the SSR and address local government onsite septic system issues through the identification of policy changes and/or regulatory amendments where appropriate.

The UBCM Sewerage System Regulation working group met on June 15<sup>th</sup> and June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The first meeting focused on approval of the scope and mandate of the group via approval of the terms of reference, as well as local government implementation experiences. It also reviewed the UBCM SSR survey results, identified the key issues of local government, and identified potential solutions for addressing local government concerns. The second meeting of the working group focused on reviewing and agreeing on a draft action plan, which outlines a series of deliverables that stakeholders will attempt to secure prior to the September UBCM Convention. The action plan will form the foundation of the working group's discussions and efforts.

The UBCM SSR working group is comprised of the following individuals:

Councillor Marvin Hunt, UBCM Past President - Chair  
Director Terry Raymond, UBCM Electoral Area Representative  
Director John Kettle, Regional District of Central Kootenay  
Karen Rothe, A/Director, Drinking Water and Land Use, BC Ministry of Health  
Glen Brown, A/Director, Engineering and Infrastructure, BC Ministry of  
Community Services  
Jared Wright, Senior Policy Analyst, UBCM (Secretary)

UBCM President Brenda Binnie and UBCM Executive Director Richard Taylor also attended the first two working group meetings, and will continue to attend to ensure the expeditious identification of solutions. The Committee is scheduled to meet at the end of July and early September, prior to the UBCM Convention.

As part of its awareness efforts, UBCM also included a panel discussion on the Sewerage System Regulation at its June 27/28 “Local Government and the Environment Conference” held at the Best Western Inn in Richmond. The panel session included senior representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Services, and the British Columbia Onsite Sewage Association, and focused on outlining measures that have been taken to date to address local government implementation concerns.

In addition, UBCM has attached a letter from the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia, which confirms that professional engineers can supervise other persons (*including owners of properties where appropriate*) in the installation of on-site sewage disposal systems under the SSR. This letter is designed in part to address a key issue raised by local governments, which is the clarification of what work, if any, homeowners can conduct in the design, construction and maintenance of onsite septic systems.

In short, UBCM has identified the Sewerage System Regulation as a key concern, and will continue to work with the Province on rectifying the implementation challenges that local governments face.

For further information on the SSR or the UBCM SSR working group, please contact **Jared Wright, Senior Policy Analyst** at **604-270-8226 (ext. 113)** or at **[jwright@civicnet.bc.ca](mailto:jwright@civicnet.bc.ca)**.