

## UBCM MEMBER SURVEY

TO: **Administrator**  
**Electoral Area Representatives**

FROM: Jared Wright, Policy Analyst

DATE: February 7th, 2007

**RE: SEWERAGE SYSTEM REGULATION SURVEY**

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In response to local government concerns with the Sewerage System Regulation (SSR), the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) is conducting a survey of local government experiences with the implementation of the provincial SSR.

UBCM would greatly appreciate your assistance in completing this seven (7) page survey by **Monday, March 5th, 2007**. All completed surveys can be sent via **fax to 604-270-9116**.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jared Wright, Policy Analyst, by telephone at **604-270-8226 (ext. 113)** or by email at [jwright@civicnet.bc.ca](mailto:jwright@civicnet.bc.ca)

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### **Background**

The Province's new Sewerage System Regulation came into effect on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005, replacing the Sewerage Disposal Regulation. The new Regulation applies to sewerage or a combination of sewerage systems with a combined design daily domestic sewage flow of less than 22,700 litres. Under this new regulation, only "authorized persons" may design, plan, construct and maintain an onsite sewage treatment system. Property owners are also required to maintain holding tanks and sewerage systems in accordance with maintenance plans, and to keep maintenance records.

Under the old system, applicants were required to apply for a permit to construct and use a system. Public Health Inspectors inspected parcel conditions and the systems construction, and homeowners, contractors and professionals designed and installed system according to prescriptive standards outlined in the Sewerage Disposal Regulation and the permit conditions. With the new Regulation, the requirement for permits has been removed and a new requirement for training and certification of industry practitioners has been implemented.

The new Sewerage System Regulation represents a shift towards an outcome-based regulation, where there is greater reliance on professionals and industry accountability in septic system installation and maintenance. Where the previous regulation was prescriptive and involved a permit/approval process with the health authorities, the new

system is basically administrative where the system designs are filed with the health authority. The filings are typically considered complete when the designer has certified the construction.

The SSR arose out of discussions between the Ministry of Health (MoH) and local governments to amend the existing sewerage regulation, which was deemed to be problematic in several areas. Under the Sewerage Disposal Regulation, there was no mechanism to ensure individual/strata corporations maintained their sewerage systems and there was no co-ordination between MoH and local governments on land use decisions and service requirements. In addition, there were liability issues associated with system failures, as the Ministry of Health does not have the ability to fix a sewerage system that fails under the Health Act, nor the ability to recover the costs of fixing if it could fix the system. The SSR was designed to address these issues, and to more effectively deal with innovative sewerage disposal proposals.

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## **SEWERAGE SYSTEM REGULATION SURVEY QUESTIONS**

### **SSR Principles**

1. How much do you agree with the following principles of the Sewerage System Regulation?

Only “authorized persons,” defined as trained practitioners and professionals, can install sewerage systems whereas previously homeowners, contractors and professionals designed and installed sewerage systems.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The regulation of sewerage systems is based on a greater reliance on industry and industry accountability instead of the previous health authority directed regulation.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The previous prescriptive permitting and approval process involving the health authorities is replaced with an administrative system where only designs are filed with the health authorities, and filings are typically considered complete when the designer has certified the construction.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Homeowners are responsible for ensuring the ongoing operation of sewerage systems, and for ensuring that the system is properly maintained.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**SSR Implementation Experience**

2. Do you believe that local governments were adequately consulted between 2003 and 2005 during the development phase of the Sewerage System Regulation?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

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3. Has your local government encountered any complaints regarding the Sewerage System Regulation?

Yes

No

If you answered YES, please answer the following questions.

4. Relative to other issues, how would you categorize the number of complaints on the Sewerage System Regulation?

significant

moderate

minimal

Comments:

If available, please provide the approximate number of complaints received to date on the SSR.

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5. Which of the following issues have been cited in complaints regarding the Sewerage System Regulation?

Increased and/or excessive costs to homeowners for system installation and repair

Lack of communication regarding the Regulation's requirements

Lack of flexibility in considering other forms of sewage disposal and alternatives to system installations

Inadequate number of certified practioners/professionals in your area

Others (Please Specify)

Comments:

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6. If sewerage system installation and repair costs have been identified as an issue, please answer the following.

Which types of systems have been identified as having excessive or high cost issues within your community?

Type 1

Type 11

Type III

Comments:

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7. What do you feel is a reasonable cost for each of the following types of sewerage systems within your community (please provide a range)?

Type 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Type 11 \_\_\_\_\_

Type III \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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8. Who should be responsible for assuming the risk and liability for ensuring properly installed and maintained sewerage systems?

Province (via Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities)

Industry

Local Governments

Homeowners

9. If you answered “local governments,” what role should local governments play within the regulation of sewerage systems?

Comments:

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10. What role does your local government currently play within the regulation of sewerage systems?

Comments:

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11. What approach does your local government take towards subdivision servicing bylaws and sewerage systems (i.e. provision of services to developments)?

Comments:

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12. Which of the following measures will address the SSR implementation concerns in your community?

- Additional information on the requirements of the Sewerage System Regulation
- Greater flexibility in the types of systems that can be installed
- Revisions to the Regulation’s standard practice manual that would reduce installation costs
- Additional information on what installation, repair and alteration work homeowners can perform under the Regulation
- Greater flexibility in allowing homeowners to perform their own work subject to inspection by a licensed inspector
- Additional certified practitioners and professionals within your area

Other (Please Specify)

Comments:

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13. Please feel free to identify any other implementation issues and/or measures for addressing implementation concerns with the Sewerage System Regulation.

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Contact Information:

Local Government \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person/ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information \_\_\_\_\_