



# North Salt Spring Waterworks District

Be water savvy - Use only what you need.

November 2017

## St. Mary WTP Ahead of Schedule



Construction is well underway on the new St. Mary Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) water treatment plant on Tripp Road. The first concrete (mud slab) pour was Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup>. The Maple Reinders Inc. (MRI) crew is currently forming for the primary slab. The directional drilling for the intake should be completed by November 10<sup>th</sup>. The complete build is expected to take about 10 months, with commissioning beginning late next summer. The relationship and communications between contractor, consultants and

NSSWD is excellent, well supported by weekly teleconferences, emails, and site visits. MRI prepares an updated project schedule for weekly circulation. In addition, MRI has made a real effort to hire locally wherever possible.

The project is currently ahead of schedule due, in no small part, to the professionalism of the team involved and the fabulous weather SSI experienced in October that has made for excellent working conditions.



The Maple Reinders crew prepare forms for the wet well concrete pour. (Photo: R. Stepaniuk)

## District Faces Significant Challenges for Future Project Funding

In light of the recent “No” vote ratepayers are now faced with the financing of all necessary capital projects to replace and upgrade District infrastructure without financial assistance from senior levels of government.

Without access to grants, financing capital projects, in addition to normal operating costs, is going to be a significant challenge for District ratepayers. To assist with strategic financial planning the Board engaged Econics.\* Based in Victoria, Econics are experienced water sustainability specialists. Although still in draft form, early indications are that in order for the District to undertake expected

upgrades, even over a span of years or decades, water toll and parcel tax rates will have to increase significantly.

The NSSWD is larger and more complex than all other water systems on SSI combined, serving an estimated year-round population of 5,500, which is greater than 87 of the 102 municipalities in BC. Although all islanders pay taxes that fund the federal and provincial governments grant programs, the district is not eligible for grants due to provincial government policy. Therefore the 2,087 properties currently on the District’s parcel tax roll, must fund all projects and all operating costs. There is no mechanism for cost sharing with all the islanders living outside the district, or tourists and visitors

who create an additional demand on the water system.

### What the Board is doing to address the challenges:

- A meeting has been scheduled later this month with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (our governing ministry) to inform them of our needs and strongly advocate for a change, or at least an exception, to Ministry policy. It is hoped that with the recent change of government, the current policy will be reviewed.
- The Board is also seeking the active support of our local MLA, Adam Olsen, as a catalyst for change.
- As previously announced, the Board will begin discussions with the CRD to investigate the possibility of conversion to a CRD service area. Conversion is a highly complex issue and careful and extensive study will be necessary to determine what this change would mean to the District before any recommendation can be made to ratepayers.
- In 2018 a careful review of toll rates and miscellaneous charges will be done before making any rate changes.
- Staff will continue to monitor and review operating costs to ensure maximum efficiency, and to direct cost savings throughout the year towards capital projects.

Please note that Board meetings are open to the public and ratepayers are welcome to make a submission or presentation to the Board. Meeting dates are available on the Board Meeting Dates page in the About Us section of our website or by calling the office.

(\*The final report will be available on the District website by the end of November.)

### Capital Construction Surcharge 2018

In 2018 the District will begin long-term debt repayment for the new St. Mary DAF plant, as agreed to in the 2015 ratepayer referendum. At the October 25th Board meeting, the Trustees agreed the base unit Capital Construction Surcharge on parcel tax invoices would increase to \$280 for the 2018. Wherever possible, monies collected to date

will be used to offset borrowing costs as well as retaining prudent reserves and for other necessary capital projects and operational emergencies. The Board elected to budget for a 2.5% raise in Parcel taxes in 2018. There was no increase to the base rate for parcel tax in 2017, however, restructuring of the parcel tax system did result in increases for some customers. The District is continuing to phase in increases to those in the commercial classes over the next three years. Assessment notices will be mailed before year-end, with parcel tax invoices expected to be mailed at the beginning of February.

A list of Capital Projects and other projects planned for 2018 is available on our website under Minutes & Financial Statements in the Documents section.

### Did You Know?

Did you know that the average leaky toilet can waste up to 200 gallons or more of water per day? That's over 6,000 gallons a month or \$58.80's worth of water for just one leaking toilet!



Often a leak is silent. If you suspect your toilet may be leaking, stop by District office and pick up a free toilet test kit. And don't forget to regularly check all your taps for drips. Repairing a leaky faucet as soon as you find it will also save you money on your water bill. Have you turned off your irrigation system for the winter?

To view the District's Leak Allowance Policy, visit the Policies page in the Documents section on the District website.

### Customer Information Updates & Emergency Contact #s

If you have changed your name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or have a new tenant please update your contact information with the District office. Also, please be sure we have an emergency/alternate contact phone number in case we need to reach you or an on-island emergency contact about your property.

*Information Change* forms are available online on the Forms page and from the office.