

Ask Judith: Sewers FAQ

What are the sewer issues?

There are several inter-related issues:

1. **Sewer taxes.** You pay sewer taxes if you are in an LSA (Local Specified Area), even if you are not hooked up to sewers. Colwood has struggled with an unfair tax system for many years, but new bylaws are providing the solution (see below).
2. **Sewer fees.** These are based on how much water you use during the winter months. (A single person with water-saving fixtures will pay much less than a household with several teenagers taking long showers!)
3. **Sewage treatment.** Colwood is part of the Capital Regional District's "Core Area" liquid waste management plan, which is currently waiting co-funding from the provincial and federal governments.
4. **Getting hooked up** to sewers. Only about 20% of Colwood residents are currently on the sewer system. The cost of connection was very high, but the new bylaws are lowering the cost.

What are the new sewer bylaws?

Council has passed new sewer bylaws that merge our 50-plus LSAs into just five LSAs, and move everyone to payments based on a parcel tax system. This means:

1. **The amount you pay will be more fair.** At the moment, neighbours can pay very different (and inequitable) amounts of sewer tax. Now properties the same size will pay the same tax in each LSA. The amount of sewer tax will also be more stable and predictable (some have fluctuated greatly in recent years). No single family home owner on a regular sized lot, in a townhouse or in an apartment will pay four-figure annual sewer taxes again.
2. **It will cost less to join the system.** For some, the cost of joining the system is currently as high as \$27,000. This will go down considerably. The actual costs will depend on how close you are to a sewer line and costs to connect from your property to the line but for most people close to the sewers it will be about \$8,000.
3. **It will be simpler to administer and understand.** This will reduce staff time needed to address this issue, and save money on the sewer fees starting in 2013.

Even after the bylaws are approved, work will be needed to get the new system in place, but staff intends to have the new tax rate in place for the 2012 tax year.

We need affordable sewage treatment

Colwood has encouraged the CRD to look at options that treat sewage as a resource, not a waste. I believe that the proposed CRD plan is too costly, lacks innovation, and is not the best approach. I will continue to promote realistic alternatives.

Changes won't happen overnight. But we are moving in a good direction and have made real progress in the last three years. Please support a progressive new council who will

Keep Colwood Moving Forward