

Subject: RE: Central Saanich Water Line (R.Watts - Vote won't end battle over water, April 6)

From: Hugh Owen <hjdowen@shaw.ca>

Date: Thu, 9 Apr 2009 18:02:47 -0700

To: scoombs@tc.canwest.com

CC: sustainability@senanus.net

Dear Editor,

Mayor Mar's statement that the proposed Senanus water line project in Central Saanich is a 'no-win situation' is unfortunate. The Mount Newton Neighbourhood Association has repeatedly requested a mediation process as the least costly solution for Central Saanich taxpayers, as this 'win-win' solution would allow mending of a community currently divided, and would facilitate equitable solutions appropriate to the limited scale of the issue for the few wells and handful of properties actually affected.

We too believe everyone has a right to potable water in the 21st century. However, one cannot simply conclude that a right to potable water means a right to piped municipal water, when the costs of this project in relation to the purported benefits do not make any sense. Spending \$1.69 Million of federal, provincial, and local taxpayers money to supply potable water only to 21 homes on Senanus Drive, at a cost of over \$80,000 per home, represents an unwise use of taxpayer funds when localized solutions exist which would cost a fraction of this amount, and would not impose punitive costs on those not requiring the service, which is also against local and regional bylaws.

The Capital Regional Growth Strategy and the Central Saanich OCP Bylaws clearly state that municipal services can only be extended beyond the Urban Containment Boundaries if there is a pressing public health concern, concern for fire protection, the environment, or agriculture. None of these issues will be addressed if this project proceeds. The Vancouver Island Health Authority has not concluded that there is a health hazard with respect to any of the wells along Mt. Newton or Senanus. Pressing public health concerns have never been identified in the area, and the proposed project will not provide enough water or pressure for fire protection or agriculture needs.

As has been repeatedly stated by Central Saanich staff and some Central Saanich councilors, the current process is seriously flawed on several fronts, including the justification for this project based entirely on the assumption that the controversial 2007 re-petition legally garnered over 50% support, despite homeowners asking to have their names removed. Those homeowners who signed the 2007 petition committed all affected residents, including less well-off residents, to writing a blank cheque for the project, as the 2007 petition states that all cost overruns will be borne by local residents.

The MNNA is very concerned about the current approach Council is taking to local governance. We continue to seek an inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based decision-making process to resolve this issue.

Hugh Owen
Mount Newton Neighbourhood Association