

## **Council Approves AquaStar Water Awareness Program and New Water Rate Structure for the City of Parksville**

PARKSVILLE, BC: At the Council meeting held on August 17, 2009, City of Parksville Council endorsed a new AquaStar Water Awareness Program and as part of this new program, approved a new water rate structure and new sanitary sewer rates.

Mayor Ed Mayne stated, "The City's AquaStar Water Awareness Program and the new water rate structure will encourage good stewardship of our existing water resources. As we go forward, elements of these new programs will include education and public awareness, conservation and community outreach. Water is a precious resource that we can no longer take for granted. There are many ways we can use water more efficiently indoors and outdoors with little or no inconvenience."

Water is considered a finite resource requiring careful management and while the City has been an excellent manager of the water system, it is now time to strategically manage demand and use. Competing interests in such areas as agriculture, recreation, industrial uses, fish and wildlife preservation, growing population and development have increased the demand on water supply systems. By managing demand, capital expenditures for a new river intake or an upgrade to the existing system, both of which require considerable capital expenditure, may be lowered or deferred. In addition to the savings in capital costs, reduced water usage directly results in lower bills to the users.

### **AquaStar Water Awareness Program**

Developed by the City's Department of Community Planning, implementation of the AquaStar Water Awareness program will create an awareness of the importance of water and how to use an acceptable amount. This new program has been developed by the City to enhance public awareness about the conservation, quality, management and supply of our water. The program will provide practical information that will help to ensure that the City of Parksville continues to have an ample water supply. To be phased in over the next few months, the AquaStar program will include an incentive program, new standards and regulations, and ongoing community outreach.

Information on the City's Water Awareness Program is available at <http://www.parksville.ca/cms.asp?wpID=273>. The website includes a copy of the new brochure, *Know Your Water Source*, as well as conservation tips and the presentation made by staff to Council on August 17, 2009. Information about the City's AquaStar Water Awareness Program will be included with the next utility bill which will be mailed in early October.

## Water Rate Structure

To support the water awareness program, ensure that the higher water users pay more, and as an incentive for wise use, a new water rate structure was approved by Council. To address the concerns from ratepayers about the City's current water rate system, staff reviewed the water rates and proposed a new water rate system that will implement fair and equitable charges and encourage wise use of water while meeting the financial needs of the City of Parksville's water utility fund. Staff evaluated a number of block rate models using City of Parksville historical consumptions, researched billing methods currently being used in other municipalities, and tested several rate models to develop a model that is equitable for both residential and commercial users.

Council approved the implementation of a new block tier water rate structure that will be phased in over three years. The 10% early payment discount will be eliminated with the October 2009 to March 2010 billing period. An explanation of this new approach to water billing for residential and commercial users will be mailed to water users in early October.

This new structure will see a gradual transition to lower base levels and increasing tiered levels with graduating water rates, allowing time for both businesses and residents to adjust their water use practices. The AquaStar Water Awareness program and the new water rate structure will work in unison. It is estimated that with increased awareness of the need to reduce consumption, water use will reduce by about 10%. There will be no increase in water rates for average water users and a reduction in water usage may directly result in lower billings.

## Sanitary Sewer Rates

New sanitary sewage rates were approved by Council and the 10% early payment discount will also be eliminated starting with the October 2009 to March 2010 billing period. The rate structure remains basically the same with a few minor changes. The base amount will be reduced to 100 cubic meters and will have a semi-annual base rate and a flat rate for excess consumption.

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### For further information:

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Water rate structure and sanitary sewer rates  
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**About Parksville** — One of the fastest growing communities on Vancouver Island, 12,000 residents call Parksville their home. Located on Vancouver Island's sheltered east coast, Parksville offers a quality lifestyle with many activities. We are committed to being the city of choice for ourselves and future generations in a clean, safe, friendly, economically viable and sustainable environment.