



Mayor's Communiqué

(February 2011)

A key challenge for local governments is to ensure that services are available and maintained for communities over the long term. Often the funding for services is deferred over a period of years and eventually a sizeable, but inevitable, fee increase for these required services must be implemented. No one likes tax or fee increases, but everyone requires safe drinking water and efficient waste treatment. Clean water and efficient sewer systems are not luxuries; they are the basics of any healthy community. The Town of Creston looks forward to upgrading our systems to ensure on going health for our community.

A year ago, in my February 2010 Mayor's Communiqué, I advised that our utility invoices for water and sewer rates saw sizeable increases. To date, these increases have been implemented for 2 years of a 5 year plan. Water and sewer utility rates have been increased 15% per year to pay for the large capital projects needed to keep our systems viable into the future.

The Town is aggressively pursuing Federal and Provincial government grants to help keep our user fees as low as possible. We have had great success by already receiving the previously announced \$4.8 million WWTP grant. In addition, the Town has been actively supporting the RDCK in its current application to secure grant funding for the Arrow Creek Water Treatment Plant and delivery system upgrades.

Frontage Tax rates, which have been the same since 1995, last year saw a 10% or \$26.00 on average increase. The Frontage Tax increases are necessary in order to maintain our 2 most important municipal infrastructure components being WATER and SEWER. Unlike utility user fees, Frontage Taxes are assessed based on the availability of a service, not on whether or not you actually receive the service.

In addition to the increases, last year, the early payment discount rate was reduced from 10% to 3% due to decreased interest rates. The high early payment discount rate was too expensive to keep offering or we would have had to raise overall fees even higher to offset such an expense.

By implementing a phased 5 year fee increase program, our water and sewer infrastructure will be upgraded and maintained to avoid any serious safety issues and we will have sound and proper water and sewer systems for the Town of Creston. Future Town Councils and staff will evaluate this 5 year plan on an annual basis. On a positive note, once the systems are upgraded, we may see operational efficiencies that could allow fee decreases over the longer term.

I want to hear from you:

Please share your concerns, your experiences, and your issues (both positive and negative) on how we can improve the quality of life in our community (the Town and the Creston Valley).

Thanks

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