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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Carol Mason  
Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** February 29, 2012

**FROM:** John Finnie  
General Manager of Regional and Community Utilities

**FILE:** 0360-20-CAVI / 5600-07

**SUBJECT:** Rainwater Management & Water Sustainability Inter-Regional Education Initiative

### PURPOSE

To seek Board support for a Vancouver Island Inter-Regional Education Initiative to assist in advancing watershed sustainability and green infrastructure practices.

### BACKGROUND

The Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia (PWSBC), under the umbrella of CAVI – Convening for Action on Vancouver Island – is undertaking to align the efforts of four regional districts on Vancouver Island (Capital Regional District, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Regional District of Nanaimo and Comox Valley Regional District) to advance an inter-regional educational initiative to benefit water-centric activities in all four areas. The initiative will focus on education, collaboration and sharing of ideas and experiences on water sustainability and rainwater management best practices.

The main objectives of the initiative include:

- Advancing watershed sustainability and green infrastructure practices Vancouver Island wide.
- Linking activities among the four regions so all areas can benefit from lessons learned.
- Increasing collaboration and alignment of efforts across boundaries.
- Sharing information and experiences.
- Promoting tools and opportunities for local governments and the development community to gain an understanding of why and how to integrate the site with the watershed and stream.
- Increasing effectiveness of decisions about the use and conservation of water assets.

The initiative will support implementation of watershed-based processes in the four regional districts.

PWSBC is a non-profit society, incorporated in 2010, that is helping the province implement the province's Living Water Smart and Green Communities initiatives. In this regard, PWSBC has approached the four Vancouver Island regions seeking their support for the initiative and for an application by the Comox Valley Regional District for a Gas Tax Fund Capacity-Building Grant to fund the educational activities under the initiative. All four regional districts have water-focused plans in place and are funding activities that are planned for 2012 and beyond. These activities can leverage a Gas Tax

grant to help PWSBC implement the CAVI educational program that will support all four regions learning and benefitting from the activities and experiences in all areas. The Comox Valley Regional District has agreed to make the application to the Gas Tax Fund on behalf of the partnership.

The proposed program includes a number of educational events in the four regional districts over the next two years. Program elements include courses and profile sessions on watershed blueprints, Water Balance Model training workshops, Learning Lunch Seminar Series events, a Guidebook update and information articles. The Partnership is anticipating making a grant application for \$300,000 (\$150,000 per year for 2012 and 2013) to assist with travel expenses for workshop and course presenters and program management and administration expenses.

Details of the request to RDN for support are included in the attached letter from the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC (Appendix A). Similar requests have been made to the Comox Valley, Cowichan Valley and Capital Regional Districts. To date, the Comox Valley Regional Board has passed resolutions of support and the Capital and Cowichan Valley Regional Boards will be considering resolutions at their March meetings.

#### *Convening for Action on Vancouver Island*

CAVI is a partnership program under the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia. CAVI's activities bring together land use planners and regulators (local government), developers and builders, and those who provide legislative framework (the Province). CAVI's vision is that water sustainability will be achieved through implementation of green infrastructure policies, standards and practices. CAVI provides leadership, coordination and education for practitioners to plan and implement sustainable water management strategies in the context of increasing settlement activity.

Formally launched in 2006, CAVI's activities are guided by a team of individuals that represent government, private and academic sectors. The CAVI Leadership Team is comprised of representatives from the province, local governments on Vancouver Island, the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC, the academic community and the consulting sector. The team meets periodically to organize and facilitate activities and initiatives on Vancouver Island that support CAVI goals.

One of CAVI's focal initiatives is its Learning Lunch Seminar Series, a program that brings various sector representatives together to share ideas about water sustainability initiatives and practices, and learn from example.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Endorse the inter-regional educational initiative as proposed by the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC and provide a letter of support for an application by the Comox Valley Regional District for a Gas Tax Fund Capacity-Building Grant to fund the Inter-Regional Education Initiative.
2. Do not provide support for this educational initiative.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications associated with supporting and participating in the initiative. The Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC is not seeking local government funding, rather support for the initiative and an interest in participating in some of the educational sessions that will be

developed. The Partnership, in association with the Comox Valley Regional District, is applying for Gas Tax funding to support the initiative and the educational activities.

### INTER-DEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The initiative and some of the educational sessions will be of interest and benefit to staff from Regional & Community Utilities and Development Services. Different one-half to one day workshops would be held in different regions. For example, a Water Balance Model Training Workshop is being considered for the Nanaimo region in May or June of 2012 and would attract staff from local government and the development community on Vancouver Island.

### SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The conservation and protection of water and watersheds is a priority in the RDN and the proposed inter-regional education initiative provides another opportunity to assist local governments to better understand the relationships between watershed and stream and site development.

### SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia has requested resolutions from the Capital, Cowichan Valley, Nanaimo and Comox Valley Regional District Boards endorsing (i) a rainwater management and water sustainability inter-regional educational initiative, and (ii) an application by the Comox Valley Regional District for a Gas Tax Funds Capacity-Building Grant to fund educational activities on Vancouver Island under the initiative. The Partnership is not seeking local government funding but rather support for the initiative and an interest in participating in some of the educational activities that will be developed. Water related activities that the four regions have in place and are planning to fund in 2012 and beyond can leverage a Gas Tax grant to help PWSBC implement the program. The program will be of interest and benefit to local governments and the development community on Vancouver Island. Staff are recommending that the RDN support the initiative and staff participation in some of the learning opportunities that will be developed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Rainwater Management & Watershed Sustainability Inter-Regional Education Initiative as proposed by the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC be endorsed.
2. That a letter of support be provided for an application by the Comox Valley Regional District for a Gas Tax Fund Capacity-Building Grant to fund the Inter-Regional Education Initiative.
3. That the Board continue to support staff participation in CAVI activities associated with water sustainability.



Report Writer



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