

OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD PLEDGES NEARLY \$81,000 A YEAR TO HELP RESIDENTS PAY FOR PENDING SEWER PROJECT

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By Paul Everest - Osoyoos Times

Residents of the area that will be serviced by the **Northwest Sector Sewer Project** can expect some relief for the financial obligations they face.

It was announced last week that the **Okanagan Basin Water Board** (OBWB) will contribute \$80,981 per year towards reducing the debt payments for the project. The water board's contribution would continue until the debt is paid off.

That means the owners of roughly 130 residences along and near Osoyoos Lake's northwest shore can expect a reduction in the \$8,000 lump sum payment or the \$890-per-year fee required to pay off the debt created by the project.

The Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is in the process of passing a bylaw that will allow it to borrow \$1,248,000 to cover the regional district's share of capital costs for the project and residents have the choice to pay the lump sum or make annual payments over 20 years to pay off the debt created by that borrowing.

Just how much relief the water board's contribution will bring is still up in the air and Mark Pendergraft, the RDOS's director for rural Area A, wasn't willing to make a guess.

"It's difficult to say until we get the tender amounts back," he said. "I would be absolutely shocked if it didn't go down."

The Town of Osoyoos, which will be extending its sewer line to the area in question, put out a request for tenders for Phase 1 of the project earlier this month.

The fact that the water board is contributing to the project is nothing new. For several years the OBWB has pledged to cover 18 per cent of the costs of the sewer extension project.

The price tag for the entire project is estimated at \$6.4 million.

The rest of the costs for the project will be covered by the developers of the Willow Beach and Reflection Point properties and by a \$4.5-million Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund grant awarded to the RDOS in 2007 from the province and the federal government.

The owner of the Willow Beach property, Georgia Laine Developments, is contributing \$950,000 while the Reflection Point developers will contribute \$154,000.

The money the water board will be contributing to the project comes from a tax it levies throughout the valley, Pendergraft said. That tax money is meant for water and infrastructure projects of this nature.

Steve Underwood, a project engineer with TRUE Consulting, the Town's engineering consultants, said Phase 1 of the project will include 36 properties on or near 81st Street, 104th Avenue, 87th Street and 98th Avenue. This phase of the project is expected to be completed by the end of June.

The second phase of the project will encompass an area from the north end of 81st Street to Robert's Point and requests for tenders for this phase will be sent out as soon as rights-of-way required for this phase are in place.

Underwood said rights-of-way are needed for nine properties serviced by the project's second phase. He added that he still has to go out and speak with several property owners in this area to finalize easement agreements for the sewer line to go through. Although Underwood said it might be difficult to secure right-of-way agreements with some property owners in the area serviced by the second phase, he was confident all six phases of the project would go ahead on schedule.

The entire sewer extension project must be completed by March 31, 2012, otherwise the infrastructure grant will expire.

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