



# **RM of St Clements**

## **Henderson Highway Sewer Project**

### **Summary of public consultation and council responses**

**July 2014**

## Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction . . . . .	3
2.0	Public engagement goals and approach . . . . .	4
3.0	What you told us: consultation results . . . . .	6
4.0	RM response to public input . . . . .	11

*We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all the citizens who participated in the public engagement process. In particular we would like to thank the more than 300 people who took the time to attend the two open houses held in May 2014. We also wish to commend the Mayor, members of Council and the RM administration for their commitment to and involvement throughout the process.*



## 1.0 Introduction

The RM of St. Clements is building a permanent sewer line along Henderson Highway from the Old River Road area to Lockport. This new sewage infrastructure along Henderson is an important part of the RM's commitment to protecting the health of the community's water, both for today's St. Clements families and for future generations.

The installation of a low pressure sewer system will allow the RM to permanently resolve a long-standing Health Order. Construction of this major \$6-million project began in the spring of 2014. With the installation of the main and lateral lines, all required infrastructure will be in place by end of year to allow for individual connections in the Old River Road area to commence. Other properties in the project area (not covered by the Health Order) will have the option to connect in the future, aligned with processing capacity at Lockport sewage treatment plant.

## 2.0 Public engagement goals and approach

The RM is committed to keeping citizens fully informed at all stages of the project.

In the Spring of 2014, public consultations were undertaken to:

- 1) Determine how to best facilitate connection for Phase 1 property owners by providing information and responding to concerns and questions;
- 2) Determine the level of public interest in future hook-ups, and to ensure demand for future hook-ups is aligned with the processing capacity at the Lockport sewage treatment plant.

The RM also wanted to gain public input and provide information on project phasing, local needs, connection costs and timelines. The following communications and public engagement activities have taken place to date:

### Project information website

- Henderson sewer project overview and project area map
- Project timelines
- Important updates
- Frequently asked questions
- Online survey
- Open houses and online open houses

### Community newsletter updates

Updates on the Henderson sewer project in the November 2013, February 2014 and May 2014 RM newsletters published in the Selkirk Record and Selkirk Journal.

### Direct mail to affected property owners

Project information letter with invitation for feedback/questions mailed to all homeowners in project area (April 2014). A second mailing to residents in the Old River Road area occurred in July 2014.

### Stakeholder interviews

Seven phone interviews conducted to identify key questions and concerns of property owners from across project area to better inform website content and information provided at consultation events.



## Public survey

Sixteen-question survey\* disseminated online (May and June 2014) as well as at the two public open houses. A total of 202 surveys were completed, with 110 surveys completed during the open house events and 92 completed online.

## Open house feedback forms

Feedback forms distributed to all open house participants during sign-in.

## Take-home project information sheets

Printed information sheets summarizing project costs and required homeowner-side equipment distributed at open houses and online.

## Email updates and contact list development

Approximately 200 individuals provided email addresses during the feedback process to allow the RM to provide electronic updates to area homeowners as the project moves ahead. Three email updates were circulated in May & June 2014.

## Public queries

22 queries received, recorded and followed up by RM staff between April and June 2014.

## General promotion of opportunities to participate

Ads placed in Selkirk Journal and Selkirk Record week of May 4 and 11, 2014; news release issued to local media May 5, 2014; online promotion via Facebook, RM website and email updates; reader board at intersection of Henderson Hwy and Old River Road from May 14 - 26, 2014.

## Public open houses

More than 300 citizens attended the two open houses, with many completing the surveys and feedback forms.

### ***May 21, 2014, 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., Corpus Christi Hall, 5819 Henderson Hwy***

- 85 participants signed in (~100 total attendees counted); 26 surveys returned; 29 open house feedback forms completed.

### ***May 26, 2014, 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., Corpus Christi Hall, 5819 Henderson Hwy***

- 201 participants signed in (~215 total attendees counted); 84 surveys returned 73 feedback forms completed.

*All open house materials were also posted online on the project website.*

**\* Non-randomized, optional surveys made available to attendees of the open houses and online via the RM website.**

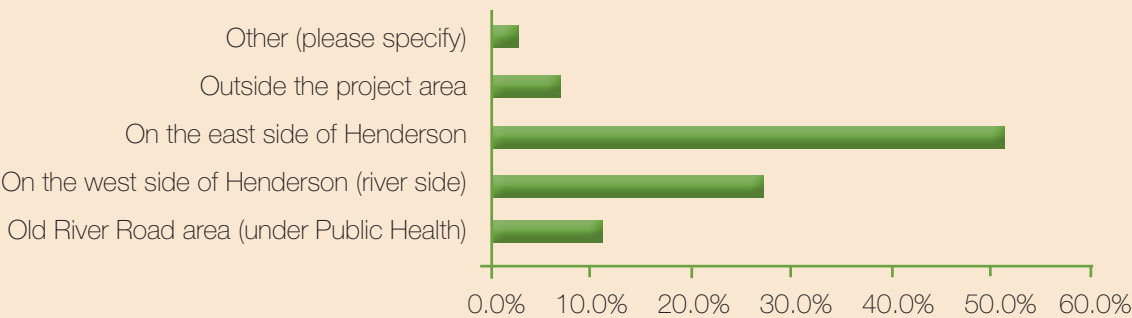
### 3.0 What you told us: consultation results

A tremendous volume of important feedback was received from participants in the public engagement activities. This input was extremely helpful for the RM of St. Clements, both to understand current septic systems, homeowner needs, and the interest in potentially hooking up to the sewer system in the future.

#### Results area 1: Where we are now

Several survey questions were focused on gathering input on age, condition and expected life of current individual sewage systems and understanding how concerned area residents were about sewage and water quality issues.

##### Where do survey respondents live?

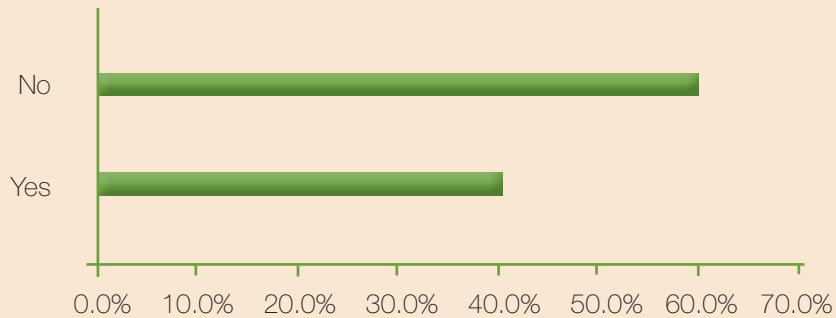


78% of respondents lived along Henderson outside the Health Order area (51% on the east side of Henderson; 27% on the west side). 11% of total survey respondents indicated they lived within the Old River Road area under the Health Order. The remainder of respondents did not live within the project area.

The majority of respondents (44%) indicated sewage facilities were more than 20 years old; 71% being 10 years or older. Nearly half of respondents (45%) expected the remaining life of their current system to be 10 years or less; 26% expected up to 20 years, and 28% of respondents anticipated more than 20 years from their system.

The survey asked whether respondents had experienced any sewer system issues in the past three years, and also whether they were aware of any septic systems that were failing in the neighbourhood. The results were quite similar; 30% of respondents indicated that they had had a minor or major issue in the last three years. When combined with those who did not know, the result was 36%. The number of respondents who indicated that their sewer system had been inspected in the last three years was also similar, at 38%.

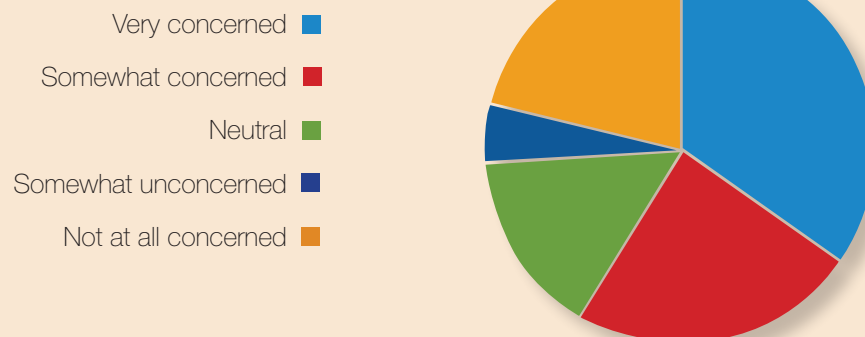
### Do you know of septic systems that may be failing in your neighbourhood?



*40% of respondents said they were aware of a septic system failing in their neighbourhood.*

Residents of RM of St. Clements are concerned about well water quality. 65% drink bottled water at home, although not all of the reasons are linked to safety and water quality concerns – taste preference was often identified as the reason. Exactly 50% have their well water tested every year or every 2-3 years.

### Are residents concerned about their well water?

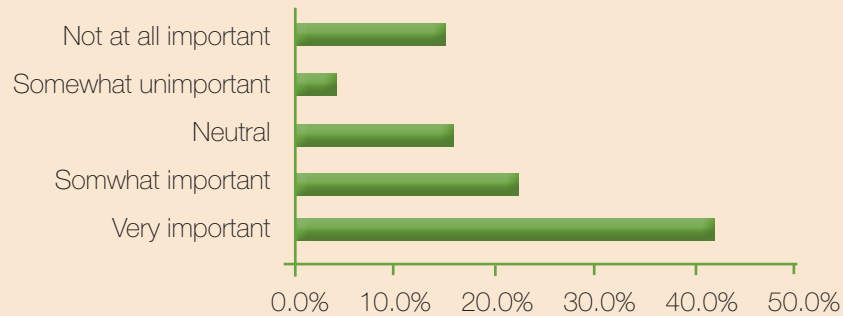


*A majority (59% of respondents) said they were either "very" or "somewhat" concerned about their well water.*

## Results area 2: What is wanted in the future

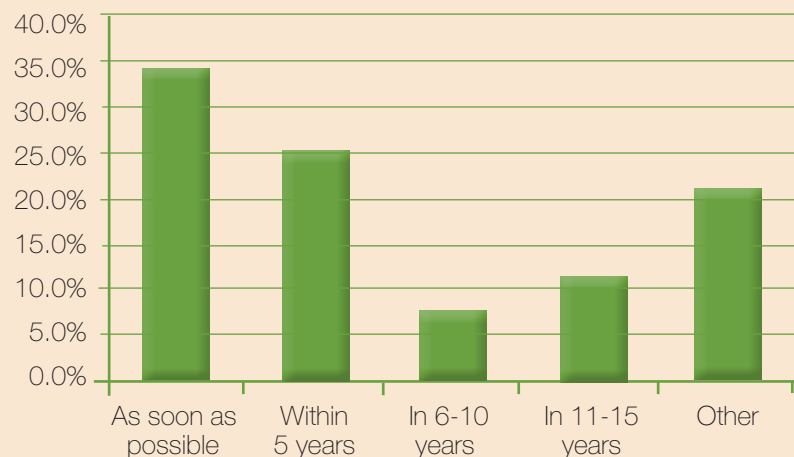
Two of the survey questions were particularly critical in assisting the RM in making decisions about next steps.

### How important is the ability to hook-up to the new sewer to you personally?



*A majority (64% of respondents) said they felt that it was either "very" or "somewhat" important to hook up to the new sewer.*

### How soon are property owners outside the Health Order area interested in hooking up?



*60% of respondents said they wanted to connect either "as soon as possible" or "within five years." In total, two-thirds of respondents (67%) are interested in connecting within ten years.*



## **Results area 3: Key feedback for further consideration**

The public consultation process was structured to allow an opportunity for citizens to ask questions and provide comment on all aspects of the sewer project. Several key themes and common questions emerged that will help guide future decision-making, planning and information updates to area homeowners.

### **Clarity around the commencement of Phase 1 hook-ups**

Homeowners in the area covered by the Health Order wanted to know when they would be required to connect to the new sewer. A number of residents were familiar with the five-year requirement mandated by the province, but were seeking additional clarification about whether the RM would either encourage or require hook-ups sooner (in particular in the context of current RM bylaws indicating a connection window of one year). Similarly, residents who are particularly keen to hook up noted a desire to receive ongoing construction updates so as to determine whether connection may be possible as early as this fall.

### **Detailed engineering specifications (Phase 1 homeowners)**

The open houses allowed the RM to provide a high-level overview of the specifications for equipment required on the homeowners' side of the property line (i.e. septic tank requirements; system components). A number of participants stated an interest in having detailed engineering specifications for required equipment as soon as reasonably available. Some residents also sought greater clarity on related engineering considerations such as whether the homeowner can have input when determining the location of their curb stop. Some questions were posed about reliability and concerns for freezing in winter. A few people questioned the capacity of Lockport sewage facility.

### **Will the RM provide a list of approved contractors?**

Some homeowners indicated a desire to have the RM assist in either pre-approving qualified contractors or otherwise assisting homeowners in negotiating competitive pricing. A few open house participants suggested the RM should simply put all Phase 1 connections to tender.

## **Will the RM allow some property owners outside of the Health Order area to connect?**

Several individuals along Henderson indicated a strong desire to connect to the sewer as soon as possible. Respondents were seeking clarity on whether there may be any additional processing capacity at Lockport and, if so, whether the RM will permit additional hook-ups beyond the Old River Road area. Several individuals suggested that if some Old River Road homes are not connecting for five years that Henderson residents wishing to connect immediately should be permitted to do so, within the processing limits of the existing plant.

## **Comments on the cost of the project**

A frequent topic raised was project costs. Questions were raised about immediate costs to home owners and also regarding future utility rates. Some respondents wanted clarification on the costs or to know if their understanding was correct. Others felt that the costs were too high. In some cases, specific circumstances were indicated and mitigation was requested. For example, several people indicated that they had just invested in a new system, or that their systems would be adequate for an extended period. Others asked whether neighbouring homes could reduce costs by sharing a service line or trench to the curb stop.

## **Detailed engineering specifications (non-Phase 1 homeowners)**

A number of property owners along Henderson (outside the Old River Road area) indicated a desire to ensure that any wastewater upgrades on their own property would be compatible with the sewer system in the event they will be hooking up in the future. These property owners noted they were keen to ensure that any work on their property over the next five to ten years would make the most sense in the context of a likely sewer hook-up in the future (for example, if their septic system is in need of replacement now, or if they were planning a new build).

## **Other results**

When asked if the open houses met their expectations, 80% indicated “yes”. Fewer than 2% of respondents said they were not able to find the information they were looking for at the open houses.

## 4.0 RM response to public input

The RM has reviewed the comments, questions and input received during the public engagement program, and has indicated its willingness to take immediate action in several areas as a result of the feedback received. The RM is also committed to further considering the public input received as part of future planning and decision making related to the Henderson Sewer Project.

### **Actions taken by the RM of St. Clements as a result of public input to-date are:**

- **RM is now pursuing arrangements in order to extend a 20-year financing option for the sewer connection fee to those homeowners in Phase 1 who wish to finance the hook-up cost through installments on their tax bill.**
- **Clarity on costs and timelines for Phase 1 (Old River Road area) property owners provided in a July 2014 letter to residents and posted on the website.**
- **The RM will assist with pre-screening contractors qualified to do the installation work on the homeowner's side of the property line. This information will be available to property owners in late fall 2014.**
- **The RM will develop a detailed specifications sheet with the project engineers for equipment and work required on the homeowner's side of the property. This information will be available in late fall 2014.**
- **The RM will conduct further engineering study and explore grants to expand capacity at the Lockport sewage treatment plant in order to address the additional demand outside of Phase 1.**
- **The RM is currently evaluating whether there is any opportunity for property owners outside of the Old River Road area to connect to the system as part of Phase 1. Once a decision is made, it will be shared with residents of the RM of St. Clements.**

The RM will continue to provide responses and information over the coming months. Information will be shared through updates on the website, emails and letters. Questions will continue to be answered to the extent possible on the RM's website FAQ page.

**[www.rmofstclements.com/henderson](http://www.rmofstclements.com/henderson)**