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News Release

District of Sooke Residential Property Taxes Second Lowest in Capital Region

Sooke, BC – December 4, 2009

Property owners in the District of Sooke experienced the second lowest average residential property taxes in the Capital Regional District in 2009, second only to the City of Langford.

And while taxes may have risen since the District incorporated in December 1999, Sooke property owners still benefit from considerably lower taxes than the rest of the CRD.

In 2009 the average residential property owner in Sooke paid \$1,583 after the Home Owner's Grant of \$570. The District of Sooke ranks second lowest in the CRD based on a 2009 Tax Survey conducted by the Town of Sidney. The municipalities rank as follows:

City of Langford	\$1,416
District of Sooke	\$1,583
Town of View Royal	\$1,816
Town of Sidney	\$1,825
City of Colwood	\$1,929
District of Central Saanich	\$2,090
District of Metchosin	\$2,108
Town of Esquimalt	\$2,159
District of Saanich	\$2,540
District of North Saanich	\$2,628
District of Highlands	\$2,729
City of Victoria	\$2,594
Town of Oak Bay	\$3,812

Property owners in the Sewer Specified Area paid an additional \$495 toward the sanitary sewer collection and treatment system. Residents following the sewer treatment debate in the Victoria core will know that this \$495 for the sanitary sewer treatment and collection system is an excellent value. It is reported within the Victoria core that the costs for the treatment facility only will be between \$250 to \$450 per household. The District paid approximately \$90 for the treatment facility component of the system with the collection system and annual operating costs making up the balance of the \$495 at \$180 for the collection system and \$225 for the annual operating costs.

Each year Council is asked to approve a new Five Year Financial Plan and balance the service requirements of the community against the ability of the taxpayers to fund these services. Over the past few years citizens have been asking the District to increase the level of services provided – safer sidewalks, more police, more fire personnel and an alternative connector through town to take the pressure off Sooke Road. This is just a sampling of the funding pressures facing the District of Sooke.

Property owners frequently wonder where the property tax increases go. They question whether these increases fund more operating costs or if they are directed to capital improvements. Council began to address these questions in 2007, with adoption of the Revenue, Tax and Budget Policy in 2008. This policy established that a minimum of 10% and maximum of 15% of municipal property taxes would be directed to the Capital Fund.

At that time the District of Sooke was only setting aside \$328,179 (or 8% of property taxes) for capital projects in the 2007 budget. In 2010, the District of Sooke is planning to transfer \$655,000 (11.6% of property taxes) to the Capital Fund. This planned increase has been accomplished over a three year period and it has been funded by a property tax increase. In 2009 the average residential taxpayer experienced a six percent increase in property taxes of which two percent was related to the increase in the property tax transfer to the Capital Fund.

It is this policy to establish a sustainable level of capital funding that will enable the District to construct the following projects over the next five years:

- A Public Boat Launch, Ramp and Pier at an estimated cost of \$1-million (funded by a \$605,000 Federal/Provincial Infrastructure Grant, \$200,000 by Prestige Hotel and \$200,000 by the District of Sooke)
- A Phillips Road to Throup/Charters Road connection at an estimated cost of \$3-million;
- A Church Road to Otter Point Road connection at a estimated cost of \$1.7-million;
- A new main street between Sooke Road and the waterfront in the town centre at an estimated cost of \$3.3 million;
- A Boardwalk Expansion between Ed Macgregor Park and the Government Wharf at an estimated cost of \$600,000.

The District of Sooke is fortunate to be a growing municipality as the development community will assist by paying 60 percent or more (existing residents must pay the other 40 percent share in accordance with provincial legislation) of the costs of the new roads through Development Costs Charges. Our share for these and many other capital project priorities are only possible through property taxation as this is the primary source of funding for all municipalities including the District of Sooke.

The District of Sooke is encouraging its residents to come out and participate in the development of the 2010 – 2014 Financial Plan by writing city hall, coming in for a visit or attending meetings related to the budget. Watch the District website for more information at www.sooke.ca.

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