Town of Qualicum Beach
MEMORANDUM

TO: Lou Varela, RPP, MCIP, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: R.K. (Bob) Weir, P. Eng., Director of Engineering & Capital Projects

SUBJECT: Asbestos-Cement Pipe Concerns

FOR INFORMATION

PURPOSE:
To present information to Council about the test results of the Town of Qualicum Beach water distribution system for the presence of asbestos.

BACKGROUND:
A recent episode of CTV's W5 news program presented a position that asbestos-cement water pipes that were installed through the 1940's to 1970's in municipalities across Canada are now a possible health risk. While the dangers of airborne asbestos fibres are well documented, Health Canada states that there is no consistent, convincing evidence of health risk from asbestos in drinking water, and as a result have not established a maximum allowable contaminant level.

DISCUSSION:
Following the airing of the W5 program, staff contacted Island Health and confirmed that the Ministry of Health aligns with Health Canada's Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality, and they do not expect water systems to start testing for the presence of asbestos.

None of the laboratories that regularly provide water quality testing services to the Town offer analysis of drinking water for asbestos. Sauvé Safety Services of Victoria was contracted to collect samples at four of the Town's sampling sites and have them analyzed at International Asbestos Testing Laboratories in Mount Laurel, New Jersey. Of the 8 samples analyzed, 7 were reported as none detected, and one sample reported a single fibre. The US EPA maximum allowable contaminant level is 7,000,000 fibres/litre.

CONCLUSION:
Samples collected from representative locations containing asbestos-cement pipes within the water distribution system for the Town of Qualicum Beach found no issue with asbestos structures in drinking water quality at this time.

Bob Weir, P.Eng.
Director of Engineering & Operations
Report Writer

Lou Varela, RPP, MCIP
Chief Administrative Officer
Concurrence

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