

## Langford Petition Group Successful

*Langford Petition Group Successfully gets over 2250 signatures in 30 days showing strong community support for a referendum on the municipality borrowing \$25 million dollars.*

Monday, February 11 2008  
Langford

For 30 days from January 12 to February 10 2008, 60 canvassers have gone door to door in Langford asking voters if they wanted a referendum on whether the municipality borrowed \$25 million dollars on behalf of local developers to build a highway interchange project. During that time over 2250 signatures were collected from Langford residents for a petition asking the city of Langford to reconsider its plans to borrow the money without seeking public approval from its citizens. This result is well in excess of the 10% threshold that would normally force a referendum, and was achieved despite winter weather that made canvassing a challenge.

Under provincial regulation municipalities are normally legally required to put loans to referendum, or to a counter-petition which asks voters if they want a referendum. While the petition does not carry legal weight because Langford has circumvented this public approval process, canvassers have mimicked the counter-petition process to show the city of Langford and the province's Inspector of Municipalities (which must approve Langford's borrowing bylaw) what would have happened if Langford residents had been consulted by their civic government.

Langford created a Local Area Service plan that lets the city avoid asking voters whether residents support the way the project is being financed. Local Area Service plans are normally designed for small-scale projects that affect neighbourhoods, and the neighbourhood in question would be consulted on the plan. Langford's Local Area Service boundary includes only undeveloped land, so there are no residents in it for Langford to consult. By creating a Local Area Service plan, Langford is in effect arguing that the highway mega-project affects no Langford residents whatsoever.

"Voters are saying in large numbers that they want a different process, that they want a say," says petition organiser Steven Hurdle. "Even the majority of supporters of the interchange project, when canvassed, signed the petition because they feel that there is such a thing as doing the right thing the wrong way."

Langford has argued that a referendum is inappropriate because they are going to attempt, over the next 10 years with the option to extend the liability to 25 years, to get the Bear Mountain-related developers to pay Langford taxpayers back for the interchange. The majority of citizens canvassed, however, have felt that since Langford taxpayers are taking on the entire initial risk that they should have the opportunity to pass judgement on the plan as would normally be the case under provincial law.

The City has additionally argued that if Langford residents were consulted in a referendum that Langford taxpayers would have to pay for the project, but in reality a municipality may have a non-binding referendum at any time to seek the opinion of voters. Langford has the option, if it wishes, of holding a referendum to ask its citizens whether they want the city's plans to go ahead as drafted.

"The City is consulting its citizens on whether they want to amalgamate with Colwood so we're already going to have a referendum on the ballot, so why not one more on whether Langford taxpayers want to borrow \$25 million?" asks canvasser Michael Mortimer. "If it's such a good deal, why not put it to the people?"

The petition will be presented as soon as possible to the province's Inspector of Municipalities to aid him in his decision regarding the legality and appropriateness of Langford's two bylaws, Bylaw 1156 (formerly 1147) which creates the Local Area Service and Bylaw 1148 which proposes to borrow \$25 million dollars without the consent of local residents. We will be urging him to consider that under provincial regulation 10% or more of eligible voters is a successful counter-petition that would force a referendum and that significantly more than that number of eligible voters in Langford have signed a petition asking that a referendum be held in the November 2008 elections before the project be allowed to go ahead. On that basis we believe the Inspector of Municipalities should not approve the bylaws until a vote has been held to give Langford residents their democratic right to have a say in the potential liability they are being asked to take on by Langford Council.

For more information, please contact:

Steven Hurdle  
Petition Organiser  
884-0575