



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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No more excuses Victoria must plan for sewage treatment now

VICTORIA, BC – Environmental groups strongly support the findings of the recently released SETAC Scientific and Technical Review of the Greater Victoria region's waste management plan and are pressing for urgent action. According to Georgia Strait Alliance, T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation and Sierra Legal Defence Fund, the scientific panel's conclusions are the final nail in the coffin of the Victoria Capital Regional District's (CRD) practice of pumping raw sewage into the ocean.

"The panel clearly stated that continuing to dump raw sewage as a waste management strategy is no longer an option for the Victoria Region," said Christianne Wilhelmson, Program Coordinator for the Georgia Strait Alliance. "The CRD had stated that the conclusions of this panel would be heard, so it must now take immediate steps to bring secondary sewage treatment, or better, to the region."

The Panel's report, presented politely to the CRD board yesterday by its Chair Dr. William Stubblefield, strongly criticized nearly every aspect of the Capital Regional District's approach to managing sewage. This includes the monitoring program (sediment, water column and surface), the knowledge of the fate and distribution of the effluent, and the ability of the CRD's source control system to control current and emerging contaminants.

"This report allows this community to turn the page," said Jim McIsaac, Clean Water Director with T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation. "The debate is no longer whether we need to treat or not; starting today we need to plan for secondary or better treatment."

"This report vindicates our concern that Victoria's actions risk our health and safety and are contrary to the laws in Canada," added Devon Page, Staff Lawyer at Sierra Legal Defence Fund. "The Panel highlighted that the regulatory regime in Canada argues for the end of untreated sewage dumping, and we call on the CRD to heed these conclusions."

The groups also support Mayor Alan Lowe's call to have a plan for treatment completed by this November, and to have treatment in Victoria by 2010. The federal government's commitment of funds for sewage treatment, along with the panel's findings, further underscores that the time for action on this issue is now.

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