

Dr. Richard Stanwick

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May 23, 2006

Dear Dr. Stanwick:

After reading your April 11 letter to the Times Colonist about sewage mentioned pollution, cost, and the value of treatment, we have to ask, in fairness, have you been given complete and current information to make some of these conclusions?

Since you wrote this letter, we have obtained the details behind the CRD's much-parroted \$447 million estimate for treatment. A Freedom of Information request shows the estimate is based on unrecorded instructions to one consultant. It ignores anaerobic technologies that allow greater resource recovery and the new federal government's commitment to shared funding, confirmed again this month. The key question remains - why would we pay more than the \$9/home/month which residents of Sidney and North Saanich pay for treatment through the CRD's secondary plant, built in 2000 for \$20 million? Construction costs have risen, but treatment technology is smarter now.

The opportunities created by sewage treatment are boundless. Core Area sewage contains enough energy to run all of our public transit buses and a further 5,000 cars, renewable energy which is recovered by European cities (Google sewage + biogas). We can divert the 3-5 million kgs/year of grease and oil bubbling to the surface over our outfalls into biodiesel. Anaerobic bacteria produce biogas and break down several persistent organic pollutants. Modern, clean technologies convert sewage sludge into biofuels and minerals. We have the technology, but lack inspiration. Are we concerned about air quality and climate change? Running buses on biofuels reduces air pollution and greenhouse gases.

Source control is not a stand alone solution. All cities which treat sewage also use source control, and as Environment Canada told the CRD in 2000, *"Treatment's not only more effective in reducing contaminants, it is effective immediately upon implementation and will remove a wide array of contaminants not targeted under source control"*.

The evidence of harm to our environment is very real. In a 2003 Environment Canada document obtained through Freedom of Information, senior staff tell then Minister of the Environment David

Anderson over the course of twelve pages how science shows CRD's untreated sewage causes pollution, and likely violates the *Fisheries Act*. The 2005 Sierra Legal Defence Fund request to BC's Ministry of Environment shows the sea beds around the outfalls are contaminated beyond the *BC Contaminated Sites Regulations*. It would seem dilution is not the solution hoped for in the '60s.

The health concerns around this issue in our communities are also high. Environment Canada expanded the local shellfish closure by 20 square kilometers to a total of 60 square kilometers because scientific modeling of our sewage plume dictated the need for the added health protection. A 2004 Ipsos Reid poll, commissioned by the CRD and obtained through Freedom of Information, shows 75% of citizens believe dumping untreated sewage into the ocean is unacceptable. Wind and kite surfers are concerned about their health when CRD reports show surface fecal coliform levels 17 times above Health Canada limits. The concern also extends to the quality of our food since through bioaccumulation, what goes into the ocean comes back on the dinner plate.

As we ask the world to come visit our Sustainable Olympics in 2010, it is ironic to discover that many developing countries have better sewage treatment than Victoria, and that they are doing their part to protect our oceans and human health.

In order for Victoria and British Columbia to work towards a real sustainable future, it is time to hold a design competition, inviting the world's experts to show us our realistic costs and resource recovery options and discover what the best solution is for Victoria. When we run buses and whale-watching boats on biofuels, we'll replace our environmental stigma with a reputation as an innovative, thoughtful, and sustainable community. It's an idea that's too good to waste.

Best Regards,



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Georgia Strait Alliance



Jim McIsaac
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Stephen Salter, PEng
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cc The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources
The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable Barry Penner, BC Minister of Environment
The Honourable George Abbott, BC Minister of Health