

Media Coverage upon release of SETAC report – July 2006:



JOEL CONNELLY

Wednesday, July 12, 2006



Victoria flushing away its image

By **JOEL CONNELLY**
P-I COLUMNIST

James Skwarok will assume his better-known identity as "Mr. Floatie" in Victoria this afternoon, dressing up in costume as a 6-foot-tall turd, donning a sailor's hat and speaking in a falsetto voice.

The get-up will draw TV cameras like flies to (bleep) as Skwarok delivers a "Frisk Assessment" at the Capital Regional District. The CRD is releasing a scientific and technical report on the discharge of untreated sewage by British Columbia's touristy capital and neighboring cities.

Mr. Floatie has become a national protest symbol in Canada, goading politicians to treat the raw, sometimes toxic effluent that gets flushed into the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Victoria is renowned for its elegant gardens, its bicycle paths and the big vote it gives to Green Party candidates.

Each day, however, it uses an international waterway as a toilet for 31 million gallons of raw sewage -- enough effluent to fill 40,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools in a year.

And that's not all. According to the regional district's own monitoring figures, 5 million kilograms of oil and grease per year flow through the Clover and Macaulay Point sewage outfalls.

Port Townsend, Sequim and Port Angeles built sewage-treatment plants years ago. North of the border, an old rule has applied: Hell hath no fury like a bureaucracy defending itself.

The Capital Regional District has stalled on sewage treatment since the 1970s. An informal 1993 agreement by B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt and Gov. Mike Lowry, setting a 2008 target for treatment, was simply ignored.

Maclean's, Canada's national magazine, named Victoria as the country's worst sewage polluter.

The latest national "report card" by the Sierra Legal Defense Fund, released in 2004, found movement toward treatment by Atlantic Coast cities -- but not Victoria.

Enter Skwarok, a student active in a local group People Opposed to Outfall Pollution (POOP).

"I saw an episode of 'South Park' on TV in which they have a similar character," he said. "The idea came -- we need a mascot."

Mr. Floatie showed up at an all-candidates meeting in last year's provincial election and was barred at the door. He tried to run for mayor of Victoria, but the city's law firm went to court to keep him off the ballot.

Slowly, though, officialdom has recognized that Victoria was becoming an international joke.

"To us it's a business issue," Robin Adair, chairman of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, said recently.

"I think there is an awful lot of science that is mixed," he added. "It's the optics. If our visitors are not happy with a lot of raw sewage in our strait, and a lot of people in Victoria are not happy about it, then we need to do something about it."

A major obstacle to sewage treatment has exited. David Anderson, Victoria's longtime member of Parliament and former Canadian environment minister, did not run again in this year's election.

Anderson could evoke a giant flushing sound in describing the Strait of Juan de Fuca. And, ignoring the volume of toxics, he managed to depict the effluent as good fish food.

"Vast amounts of fast-moving well-oxygenated sea water moving through at anything up to 6 knots does what a treatment plant does artificially," he told the House of Commons last year. "It oxygenates the sewage. It eliminates the problem of pathogens. Essentially, we end up with nutrients."

By contrast, Canada's new Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, pledges to get off the pot.

Harper told a recent Victoria news conference that the federal government would pay one-third the cost of a sewage-treatment plant. "I'd like to see it high on the agenda," he said.

Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe, chairman of the Capital Regional District board, delivered a welcoming response: "The ball is in the CRD's court and as chair of the CRD, I'm hoping to lead this initiative."

One major actor, sitting on a budget surplus, remains reticent.

The B.C. provincial government promises that the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver will be the "greenest in history," but says nothing about the brown stuff Victoria sends into what wags nickname the Strait of Juan de Poopa.

"This is one of those governments, like the Republicans in your country, that engages in 'greenwashing': They talk a good game while easing the rules on polluters," said Rob Fleming, a provincial lawmaker from the opposition New Democratic Party.

The province has a history of preaching, but not practicing.

Its environment minister, Barry Penner, led resistance to the Sumas² power plant, a natural-gas facility planned for Whatcom County. Penner argued that it would pollute an international airshed shared with his Fraser Valley constituents.

The Strait of Juan de Fuca is, of course, an international waterway shared by the U.S. and Canada, and salmon runs spawn in rivers of both countries.

"Strait talk" is needed the next time Gov. Christine Gregoire talks to B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell. Amid highfalutin agendas of trade and the Olympics, Gregoire has not raised the sewage issue.

She might suggest an ideally named opportunity to announce a cleanup of Victoria's sewage. Each session of the B.C. Legislature begins with a reading of the government's program by the lieutenant governor, the ceremonial head of state.

The ritual's name: The Speech from the Throne.

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TIMES  COLONIST

City awaits sewage report card: \$605,000 review from environmental firm to focus on area's liquid waste practices

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Wed 12 Jul 2006

Page: A1 / Front

Section: News

Byline: Bill Cleverley

Source: Times Colonist

Greater Victoria politicians will get a \$605,000 report card today on what we flush down the toilet and what effect -- if any -- it's having on the ocean.

The Capital Regional District hired Florida-based SETAC, the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, for \$605,000 in September to conduct a review of the region's practice of dumping billions of litres a year of raw sewage into the saltchuck.

"I haven't seen [the report] and no idea what to expect," said Denise Blackwell, Langford councillor and CRD core area liquid waste management committee co-chair.

"You see all sorts of stuff in the paper from scientists and folk up at UVic who say it's perfectly fine what we're doing. So it will be interesting to hear what some scientists from outside the region think."

Esquimalt Mayor Chris Clement, who chairs the CRD environment committee, doubted the report would contain any surprises.

"My own gut feeling is it isn't going to have anything too earth-shattering because, essentially, all the data we've had to this point, we gave them," Clement said.

"The interesting question that I would like to see addressed is how much money have we spent on all these studies over the last 30 years."

Armed with stacks of studies the CRD has long argued its practice of pumping 129 million litres a day of raw, screened sewage into Juan de Fuca Strait is virtually environmentally benign; that the cold, deep, fast flowing saltwater serves to naturally treat the effluent.

Rather than build a large, expensive secondary or tertiary treatment plant, the CRD has instead focused on source control -- trying to remove harmful chemicals and pollutants at source, stopping them before they are dumped into the drain or flushed down the toilet.

Critics say dilution isn't the solution to pollution.

SETAC established a website to accept data from anyone who was interested and a panel, including scientists from San Diego, Washington state, Alberta and Ontario undertook the review. SETAC was originally supposed to finish its report by March but in January was granted a three-month extension. Its report is now complete and due to be presented to the CRD board this afternoon.

Greater Victoria has gained an international black eye in many circles for its lack of sewage treatment. Environmentalists say the region is violating federal fisheries regulations and point to shellfish harvest closings as proof treatment is necessary. But local politicians have argued until it is proved to be necessary there are better ways to spend the more than \$470 million they say a treatment plant would cost.

CRD chairman and Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe has said he wants to see sewage treatment become a reality, especially since Prime Minister Stephen Harper is willing to foot part of the bill. On Tuesday, Lowe refused comment until after today's meeting.

Blackwell doubted any immediate action would be taken on treatment. "We're talking big dollars (to build treatment). Unless the report says here's a really new and innovative way of doing it that will only cost you a whole lot less money I can't see anything really happening immediately."

Blackwell said there are many options, ranging from the status quo to several small treatment plants to one or two large ones. She noted that Langford and Colwood have been considering a treatment plant of their own.

Broadcast Media hits from sewage story (see Sierra Legal's advisory from yesterday - including CBC TV CKNW and CKNW radio news.) Story also appeared on A channel news in Victoria

CANADA NOW (PACIFIC) (CBUT-TV), 12 Jul 2006, 06:10pm, Length: 00:02:15, Ref# 6B4E5A-6
VICTORIA: EVERY YEAR BILLIONS OF LITRES OF RAW SEWAGE DUMPED INTO PACIFIC OCEAN. "ALAN LOWE" CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT. "BILL STUBBLEFIELD"

ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICOLOGIST SOCIETY. "CHRISTIANNE WILHELMSON" GEORGIA STRAIT ALLIANCE.

NEWS (17:30) (CBU-AM), 12 Jul 2006, 05:33pm, Length: 00:00:30, Ref# 6B4E85-3
CAPITOL REGIONAL DISTRICT: SCIENTIFIC PANEL SAYS DUMPING RAW SEWAGE OFF COAST IS NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION.

NEWS (CKNW-AM), 12 Jul 2006, 05:07pm, Length: 00:00:30, Ref# 6B54E9-10
CAPITOL REGIONAL DISTRICT: NEW REPORT SAYS DUMPING RAW SEWAGE INTO OCEAN IS NO LONGER A VIABLE LONG TERM TREATMENT FOR CITY.

The following story from the Times Colonist (Victoria) - also appeared in modified versions in the Vancouver Sun, canada.com national, The Daily News (Nanaimo), Edmonton Journal, Daily Townsman (Cranbrook) Prince George Citizen and The Daily Bulletin (Kimberley)



National

POSTED ON 13/07/06

New way to treat sewage needed, report says

DIRK MEISSNER

Canadian Press with a report from Matthew Kwong

VICTORIA -- Pumping raw sewage into the Pacific Ocean is no longer a long-term treatment option for Victoria, a report prepared by an independent scientific body hired by Victoria politicians concludes.

Victoria must eventually do something to treat the millions of litres of sewage it pumps into the ocean, Dr. Bill Stubblefield, chairman of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry North America, said yesterday.

Victoria, which bills itself as a tourism mecca and environmental paradise, is constantly criticized nationally and internationally for promoting its clean and healthy lifestyle while allowing 129 million litres of sewage to flow into the ocean every day. Victoria's Capital Regional District accepted the \$605,000 report on behalf of the city and neighbouring communities, but indicated the sewage-treatment issue will require further study.

"I think this is positive. At this stage, there's a choice between doing what's right and doing what's easy and I think this supports the right approach, which is more study, treatment and addressing the risk of this on the basis of human health and ecosystem impact," Sierra Legal Defence Fund lawyer Devon Page said in an interview.

"There's a belief by the CRD that dumping sewage is not a problem," Georgia Strait Alliance program co-ordinator Christianne Wilhelmson said in an interview.

"This report is saying that though we don't know exactly what the long-term effects will be, there's enough evidence and public will to [begin treating sewage]."

The regional district will assess the issue, including costs, over the next five months. A report on sewage options will be debated near the end of this year.

"We know that there are some who would like us to make a decision immediately," said Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe in a statement released as the regional board met to discuss the issue behind closed doors.

"While I understand those concerns, it is important that we look at all facets of the sewage issue," he said. "Only then will we be in a position to make an informed decision."

Dr. Stubblefield said the society's seven-member panel concluded the Victoria area should consider sewage-treatment options, because the current practice of pumping untreated sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca is no longer a long-term answer.

About 50 people attended the meeting in a downtown boardroom, including several local sewage activists.

Seated next to bureaucrats in suits was a person in a brown, felt suit designed to resemble a large piece of human waste.

Outside of the meeting, the person in the brown suit, who calls himself "Mr. Floatie," said he wanted action on the sewage issue.

During the last federal election, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Ottawa was willing to pay some of Victoria's sewage costs, but there has been no confirmation of how much money the federal government will contribute to a project estimated to cost about \$500-million.

Last March, federal Environment Minister Rona Ambrose said municipalities that dump raw sewage in the ocean are placing the public's health at risk.

But Vancouver Island's chief medical health officer said last November, a secondary treatment plant for raw sewage will not produce a measurable benefit to the health of Victoria-area residents.

Dr. Richard Stanwick said the money to build a secondary sewage treatment plant, estimated to cost \$477-million plus almost \$17-million a year in operating costs, could be better used building other city projects.

TIMES COLONIST

'You can't keep dumping': Sewage report: Little harm evident now, but fast-growing region must look to the future

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Thu 13 Jul 2006

Page: A1 / Front

Section: News

Byline: Rob Shaw

Source: Times Colonist

Greater Victoria cannot indefinitely dump raw sewage into the ocean, a panel of independent scientists from across North America said Wednesday.

That was the closest the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) came in its \$605,000 report to recommending an immediate need for sewage treatment.

The panel delivered its long-awaited final report to the Capital Regional District Wednesday, but stopped short of saying when, or if, treatment was needed. That decision is complex and will have to be made by local politicians, said SETAC panel chairman William Stubblefield.

While public health risk and environment damage from sewage dumping is relatively low, the current practice can't be sustained as the region grows, said Stubblefield, whose group was hired last year.

Pro-treatment advocates said the report was a waste of money, but praised its call to eventually stop sewage dumping.

Behind its eco-friendly tourist image, Victoria is one of the few North American urban centres pumping raw sewage into the ocean and Maclean's magazine has labelled Greater Victoria the worst sewage offender in Canada.

The CRD, which controls Greater Victoria's wastewater, shoots about 129 million litres of raw sewage a day into the ocean through two underwater outfall pipes at Macaulay and Clover points.

Some have argued the natural currents of the Pacific Ocean dilute the sewage but environmental groups insist it is damaging the ecosystem.

"The panel also finds that the reliance on dilution and natural dispersion processes in the Strait of Juan de Fuca is not a long-term answer that can be lived with," said Stubblefield.

The region faced unwanted international attention when a pro-treatment crusader dressed as a giant piece of fecal matter tried to run for Victoria mayor last year.

The brown-costumed man, called Mr. Floatie, sat in the front-row for SETAC's presentation Wednesday and later praised the report.

Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe, who is also CRD chairman, said the report provided unbiased scientific information and echoed its point that a change would be needed at some point.

He added that politicians will examine different treatment costs, expected to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The federal Conservative government has said it would chip in one-third of the funding, with the province and municipalities expected to split the rest.

"I have always stated that with the federal and provincial assistance, we should go forward and have at least a secondary treatment facility," said Lowe.

Christianne Wilhelmson, with the Georgia Strait Alliance environmental group, praised the report as a step forward in the battle for sewage treatment. She said the scientists clearly called for change in how the CRD handles liquid waste.

But she said the money could have been better spent.

"It was not worth \$600,000," she said of the report. "We could have told [politicians] these conclusions a year ago, in fact for many years we have been saying that."

COSTS, PRESSURES, CHOICES: WHERE WE STAND ON SEWAGE

Where Greater Victoria stands on sewage treatment:

Cost: The only cost estimates are old figures that will be updated this fall, say Capital Regional District staff.

Two traditional secondary treatment plants could cost \$447 million without the price of land, according to an estimate from 2000 (updated in 2004).

Environmentalists say it can be done for as low as \$180 million, based on the cost of plants in North Saanich and Halifax. The costs would likely be split among federal, provincial and municipal governments with possible public-private partnerships.

Treatment type: Pro-treatment advocates have called for a design competition to look at tertiary treatment (the highest level), smaller plants, and sewage resource recovery to generate biofuel. The CRD has not decided on a type of treatment.

Location: Macaulay and Clover points make the two best locations for plants because they are already sewage outfall pumping sites, the CRD has said. But the Department of

National Defence owns Macaulay Point and has no plans to release federal lands. Colwood and Langford also want their own West Shore treatment plant.

Provincial pressure: The B.C. Ministry of Environment is reviewing a consultant's report to determine if Macaulay and Clover points are contaminated sites. It also is setting new levels for pollution at the outfall sites.

Federal pressure: Prime Minister Stephen Harper has promised funding for treatment from his minority government. Typically, such funding is a one-third commitment.

Environment Minister Rona Ambrose has said municipalities that dump raw sewage in the ocean are placing public health at risk (Vancouver Island public health officer Richard Stanwick disagrees) and Ottawa will "review the issue."

-- Rob Shaw

Edition: Final

Story Type: Business

Note: Ran with fact box "Costs, Pressures, Choices: Where We Stand on Sewage" which has been appended to the story.

Length: 754 words

TIMES COLONIST

Next: the rush to shore up region's treatment options

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Thu 13 Jul 2006

Page: A3

Section: News

Source: Times Colonist

The SETAC sewage report will spark a flurry of behind-the-scenes activity at the Capital Regional District, where staff hope to have updated financial figures and proposed types of treatment plants ready for political consideration later this year.

"You talk about next steps, the intent is by the end of the year to have a comprehensive report to the board so they can start dealing with the questions asked here," said CRD chief administrative officer Kelly Daniels.

CRD planning from 2000 called for treatment plants at Macaulay and Clover points, the current sites of ocean outfall pumps. But Colwood and Langford have since expressed interest in a dedicated West Shore treatment plant.

"We need more updated financial information," said Daniels. Staff will also explore public-private partnerships.

"We need to look again at what is the optimum amount of plants, given the West Shore [suggestion]."

Politicians will pore through and debate the SETAC report at the CRD's liquid waste management committee meeting July 26.

Additional highlights of the report:

- The CRD lacks proper authority to enforce some of the policies in its Liquid Waste Management Plan (the document that outlines its sewage dumping policies).
- Generally, the CRD's monitoring of sewage pollution in the marine environment is comprehensive and impressive.
- Current human exposure to sewage and related risks is minimal.
- Decision-making on sewage treatment is heavily dependent on seafloor triggers -- pollution levels which if exceeded call for immediate sewage treatment to begin. But the triggers have deficiencies and will not be effective in protecting the environment.

Edition: Final

Story Type: Business

Length: 258 words

TIMES  COLONIST

Protect the planet, treat sewage

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Thu 13 Jul 2006

Page: A13

Section: Comment

Byline: Jim McIsaac

Source: Times Colonist

Re: "Sewage treatment as an exercise in waste," July 7.

Ted Dew-Jones' 1991 book *Victoria's Sewage Circus* has set sewage treatment in Victoria back at least 15 years. This book came on the heels of an 18-month study into our liquid waste management options by Dr. Tony Boydell, current dean of environmental studies at Royal Roads University.

Boydell's study indicated only two options for sewage treatment, both included secondary treatment, either one large plant or several smaller plants.

Dew-Jones' argument for dilution as the solution to sewage pollution in Victoria is convincing but use a skeptic's eye when reviewing it.

To think that mankind's water pollutions, injected mainly through wastewater pipes, is having no impact on our oceans has been repeatedly proven false over the past 15 years.

To think that all that is needed to break down organic matter is oxygen is false; it is micro-organisms that use oxygen to break down organic matter, no micro-organisms, no breakdown. To think that what we discharge is all natural elements is also false; more than 70,000 man-made chemicals are in production, most go down our drains daily.

Persistent organic pollutants, instead of diluting in the ocean, bioconcentrate up the food web. Endocrine disruptors, like nonylphenol, are not as toxic in volume as they are on exposure timing (during critical development stages), dispelling the myth that the dose makes the poison.

Life is not simple; our science, what we know about life, is limited. We owe it to future generations to protect this planet as best we can. Sending polluted water freely back into the environment is undefendable.

Jim McIsaac,

clean water director,

T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation.

Edition: Final

Story Type: Letter

Length: 276 words

This CP wire story was picked up by Broadcast News, the Province (Vancouver), Timmins Daily Press (Ontario), Daily Courier (Kelowna) Daily News (Kamloops), Penticton Herald, Nelson Daily News, my telus national news, yahoo canada.



Dumping raw sewage into ocean no longer viable for Victoria, says report

CP Wire

Wed 12 Jul 2006

Section: National general news

says report

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report on behalf of the city and neighbouring communities, but indicated the sewage treatment issue will require further study.

over the next five months. A report on sewage options will be debated near the end of this year.

decision immediately," said Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe in a statement released as the regional board met to discuss the issue behind closed doors.

look at all facets of the sewage issue," he said. "Only then will we be in a position to make an informed decision."

Victoria area should consider sewage treatment options, because the current practice of pumping untreated sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca is no longer a long-term answer.

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suit designed to resemble a large piece of human waste.

himself Mr. Floatie, said he wanted action on the sewage issue.

"Come on Victoria, build me a home. Get off the pot."

some of Victoria's sewage costs during the last election, but there has been no confirmation of how much money the federal government will contribute to a project estimated to cost about \$500 million.

municipalities that dump raw sewage in the ocean are placing public health at risk.

November, a secondary treatment plant for raw sewage will not produce a measurable benefit to the health of Victoria area residents.

treatment plant, estimated to cost \$477 million plus almost \$17 million a year in operating costs, could be better used building other city projects.

was negligible.

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Length: 318 words



Victoria may have to stop dumping raw sewage

July 13th, 2006 - 7:49am

(Victoria) - A scientific panel has concluded that dumping raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca is no longer a long-range option for Victoria, British Columbia. The report was released yesterday by an independent panel that was paid more than half a (m) million dollars by the Capital Regional District. The study panel was headed by Dr. Bill Stubblefield, chairman of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry North America. He says British Columbia's capital city eventually must begin providing sewage treatment. District officials say the issue will be discussed over the next five months, followed by a report on sewage treatment options. A sewage treatment plant is project to cost 450 (m) million dollars or more. Victoria currently discharges more than 34 (m) million gallons of raw sewage a day into the strait, across from Port Angeles. Victoria-area health officials maintain that the sewage poses no threat to the public because it is rapidly dispersed by currents.

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Friday, July 14, 2006 - 12:00 AM

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Victoria revisits issue of treating its sewage

By Jonathan Martin
Seattle Times staff reporter

Victoria, B.C., is the only large city in North America that has made no effort to stop pumping its raw sewage into a waterway. Even Tijuana, Mexico, does more.

Each day, 34 million gallons belch directly into the Strait of Juan de Fuca — more than enough to fill the Exxon Valdez every other day.

But after years of notoriety, the genteel capital of British Columbia finally may be willing to clean up its image.

A blue-ribbon panel of scientists hired by the local sewer board said, in polite language, that dumping straight into the ocean was "not a long-term answer" for sewage treatment.

The cold, brisk waters of the Strait may dilute some of the environmental harm, but Victoria must weigh the political and economic costs of lagging behind other metropolitan cities, the scientists from the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry wrote in a report presented to the sewer board on Wednesday.

In the front row of the meeting was "Mr. Floatie" — an anti-dumping activist wearing his familiar dark brown costume.

The report, years of bad publicity and a financial pledge by the Canadian government may finally be enough to restart long-stalled plans for a sewage treatment plant, said Alan Lowe, Victoria's mayor.

"The city of Victoria continues to have a black eye from the environmental groups as well as the tourism sector," he said. "Our neighbors to the south are concerned. They're not dumping sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, but we are."

Lowe said the sewer board still needs to land more government money for the plant, estimated to cost about \$400 million. He also must get consensus from those who believe the effluent is sufficiently diluted by ocean waters.

"The stars are starting to line up," Lowe said.

If so, it would end a running dispute between Victoria and Washington state.

In 1992, a Washington lawmaker led a tourist boycott of Victoria over the sewage dumping. The boycott led to a promise of a secondary treatment plant by 2008. But that pledge has not been fulfilled.

Victoria does not want or need more bad publicity, especially with the 2010 Winter Olympics heading to Vancouver, said Bruce Carter, head of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce.

"It's not the type of reputation we want to create," said Carter. "We are the city of gardens. It's not responsible for us to dump that raw sewage."

And besides, said Lowe, the mayor, if the dumping does not end, "there could be protesters" during the Games. "Nobody wants that."

Glenn Kuper, a spokesman for the Washington state Department of Ecology, said the cities of Port Angeles and Sequim, located just across the Strait, treat their discharges. "We believe it would be appropriate for Victoria to invest in a similar level of wastewater treatment, especially given our focus on protecting Puget Sound," he said.

The U.S. government's recent interest in saving the southern resident orca whales, which travel past Victoria, also has renewed protests over the dumping.

"To be in the year 2006 and having a major city discharge raw sewage is completely unacceptable," said Kathy Fletcher, executive director of the People for Puget Sound. "It's always struck me as problematic to lean on every person with a septic system and yet have a whole city discharging raw sewage."

Sewage for the greater Victoria area, with more than 300,000 residents, is flushed out to sea in two pipes submerged near the entrance to the Port of Victoria. Residents and business are asked to not flush toxin-laden liquids, but water samples have found levels of fecal coliform bacteria at 1,400 times the Canadian national standard just above the pipes.

The only filter is a screen, intended to catch toilet paper and condoms, which used to wash up on San Juan Island, said Christianne Wilhelmson of the environmentalist group Georgia Strait Alliance.

"Somewhere along the line it's become a belief system that we are lucky in Victoria to have an ocean that will just treat this sewage and wash it away," she said. "To me, it's obvious: Sewage is pollution, and you don't dump pollution in the environment."

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Scientific panel says Victoria should plan to end sewage dumping

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VICTORIA, British Columbia -- Dumping raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca is no longer a good long-range strategy for the British Columbia capital, an independent scientific panel has concluded.

Some treatment will eventually be necessary for the more than 34 million gallons of sewage that are now pumped deep into the strait between Vancouver Island and Washington state, Dr. Bill Stubblefield, chairman of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry North America, said Wednesday.

The society's seven-member panel was paid about \$530,000 by the Capital Regional District for the report.

District officials say the issue, including costs, will be discussed over the next five months, followed by a report on sewage treatment options.

"We know that there are some who would like us to make a decision immediately," Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe said in a statement released as the regional board met behind closed doors.

"While I understand those concerns, it is important that we look at all facets of the sewage issue," Lowe said. "Only then will we be in a position to make an informed decision."

There has been no word from Ottawa on how much money the Canadian government might contribute to a sewage treatment project, which has been estimated to cost around \$440 million.

In November, the island's chief medical health officer, Dr. Richard Stanwick, said secondary sewage treatment would not produce a measurable health benefit for Victoria-area residents.

He said the money to build and operate such a plant would be better used on other projects, asserting that the health risk from dumping sewage into the strait is negligible.

TIMES COLONIST

Sewage treatment time has come: CRD's expert panel review should end debate; risks are clear and monitoring inadequate

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Fri 14 Jul 2006

Page: A16

Section: Comment

Source: Times Colonist

Strip the qualifications and scientific caution from the latest sewage study and the message is clear -- it's time to start serious work on waste treatment.

The review notes it's difficult both to assess the risks in dumping sewage and to weigh the costs and benefits of treatment.

But, it concludes, the time has come to accept the need for waste treatment. "A reasonable case can be made that incurring the expenses of sewage treatment would be prudent public policy in line with the expression of public preferences," the expert panel reports. "Relying on the dilution and natural dispersion processes of the Strait of Juan de Fuca is not a long-term answer to wastewater disposal."

The report, in maddeningly cautious prose, concludes that the risks of all kinds are too great to continue dumping one billion litres of waste each week into the ocean.

Both sides in the sewage debate can find legitimate research to support their claims that sewage treatment is either desperately needed or a waste of money.

But the study notes that it is impossible to be certain that the sewage being poured into the ocean is not doing harm -- to people and to marine life.

That should be enough to establish the need for treatment. We have, as a society, accepted the need to err on the side of caution in deciding on such major environmental issues.

The report also suggests that the Capital Regional District may have been unable to establish a need for treatment because it has been doing an inadequate job of monitoring the effects of untreated sewage.

For example, the CRD tests only once a month for fecal coliform at the Clover Point and Macaulay Point outfalls. That's far too infrequent, the study warns. And it uses an inadequate contamination standard that may understate the health risk.

Even with the poor data, the plume of sewage that regularly rises to the surface poses a potential health risk to anyone exposed to the water, the study found.

The CRD's marine-life monitoring is impressive, the panel found. But "numerous gaps" make it difficult to assess damage.

Most seriously, the study says the "trigger process" which the CRD introduced to provide an early warning that treatment is required is inadequate. It doesn't assess the risk effectively and would not allow introduction of waste treatment in time to avoid environmental damage.

In short, the study makes the case for treatment. The only issue is when work should begin.

How about now? The Harper government has promised money for the project. The province can afford to come up with its share.

And, for a reminder of some of the PR risks of delay, consider the Seattle Post-Intelligencer column this week that told the paper's readers that Victoria "uses an international waterway as a toilet."

There's much work to be done in establishing costs, choosing technologies and -- likely most contentious -- finding the one or two sites that will be needed for sewage plants.

But the debate has gone on long enough. It's time for treatment.

Edition: Final
Story Type: Business; Editorial
Length: 510 words

TIMES COLONIST

Money down the drain
Times Colonist (Victoria)
Fri 14 Jul 2006
Page: A17
Section: Comment
Byline: Betty Eckgren
Source: Times Colonist

I agree with local politicians that until it can be convincingly proved that our present method of disposing of sewage far out to sea is harmful, we should not spend a whopping \$470 million on treatment plants. The advice from respected scientists at UVic that cold, deep, fast flowing salt water renders human waste harmless is pretty convincing.

It's important to keep poisons out of the ocean. Reports indicate our sewage is already being filtered in some way. Regular household pick-ups of harmful substances such as paint thinner or bleach should be collected from households on a regular schedule. Then, what is done with the poisons? Are they buried in the ground?

The CRD has already done extensive testing. Was it really necessary to spend more than half a million dollars on yet more research, especially by a foreign company?

Betty Eckgren,

Saanich.

Edition: Final
Story Type: Letter
Length: 143 words

Following story also appears as [Sewage treatment can wait, report says](#) in Victoria News

Saanich NEWS

 [BACK](#)

 [SEND TO A FRIEND](#)

 [FEEDBACK](#)

[Sewage report offers little](#)

By Brennan Clarke
Saanich News
Jul 14 2006

Those expecting a consultant's findings on sewage to trigger the immediate construction of a treatment plant for the region, the report's release on Wednesday fell somewhat short of expectation.

However, the \$600,000 study clearly stated that dumping raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca is "not a long-term answer to waste disposal" and warned that population growth and emerging federal standards will make improved sewage treatment a necessity in the coming years.

Released at a Capital Regional District board meeting Wednesday, the report from the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry concluded that the current system poses no significant environmental risks but warned that those risks will accumulate over time.

Jim MacIsaac of the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation, an environmental group, predicted the report will propel the CRD toward building a sewage treatment plant to serve Victoria and the West Shore communities.

"I am dead certain that it will do that," MacIsaac said. "My impression of the conclusion that was presented at the board meeting was 'the status quo won't do.' They said quite clearly they don't know when the carrying capacity for the Strait will be breached and that you have to have a strong, principled approach there."

The notion that Victoria will need sewage treatment before too long but not right away reflects the position many CRD board members have taken in recent months, Lowe said.

"It confirms what I've been thinking and what CRD board members have been saying," he said.

The report also gave high marks to the CRD's liquid waste management plan for initiatives such as reducing sewage overflows into the environment, developing a "remediation program to protect local harbours," source control of non-organic



Ken Regehr/Saanich News

Local surfer Erik Skwarok poses with sewage treatment crusader Mr. Floatie, a.k.a. James Skwarok, outside the Capital Regional District offices after the release of a report on sewage treatment Wednesday. Mr. Floatie was unavailable for comment.

contaminants and studying the risks presented by raw sewage outfalls.

More worrisome than the discharge of organic sewage is the presence of heavy metals such as copper and lead, along with "persistent organic contaminants" such as PCBs and PBDEs known to concentrate in marine mammals.

However, more study is needed to determine if those compounds originate from the sewer system, the storm-water system, or both.

Speaking for the panel of experts that prepared the report, SETAC scientist Bill Stubblefield noted that killer whales are exposed to higher levels of chemical contaminants "far afield" from Victoria's sewage outfalls.

The report noted that "Victoria's contribution of persistent organic contaminants is undoubtedly minor, yet concern about these contaminants is heightened in the local area because orcas (killer whales) in the Georgia Basin have been identified as one of the world's most contaminated creatures."

The environmental footprint of Victoria's raw sewage and storm-water discharges will increase proportionately as effluent volume grows alongside the region's population, the report said. "Those risks increase with the generation and disposal of more wastewater resulting from urban growth, particularly when the wastewater is not treated."

The Daily News

Victoria told dumping raw sewage into ocean can't continue: Bruce Stotesbury photo

The Daily News (Prince Rupert)

Thu 13 Jul 2006

Page: 10

Section: Provincial

Byline: Rob Shaw

Dateline: VICTORIA

Source: CanWest News Service

VICTORIA-- Victoria cannot dump raw sewage into the ocean indefinitely, a panel of independent North American scientists said Wednesday.

Behind its eco-friendly tourist image, Victoria continues to pump about 129 million litres of raw sewage a day into the ocean through two underwater pipes.

Supporters argue the currents of the Pacific Ocean dilute the waste. But environmentalists insist it damages the ecosystem and endangers public health.

While the current public health risk and environment damage from sewage is relatively low, dumping cannot continue as the population increases, said William Stubblefield, chair of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) panel.

"The panel also finds that the reliance on dilution and natural dispersion processes in the Strait of Juan de Fuca is not a long-term answer," Stubblefield said during a presentation to the Capital Regional District (CRD), which controls Greater Victoria's waste.

Victoria's sewage practices were placed under the national spotlight last year when a national magazine called it the worst sewage offender in Canada. The CRD hired Florida-based SETAC last September to analyze the impact of sewage dumping.

SETAC put together seven scientists from Oregon, San Diego, Washington State, Waterloo, Alberta and both the Canadian and American governments.

The region also faced gained notoriety when a pro-treatment crusader dressed as a giant piece of fecal matter tried to run for mayor last year. The costumed man, called Mr. Floatie, sat in the audience for Wednesday's presentation and praised what he heard.

Including local staff costs, the bill for Wednesday's report came to \$605,000.

Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe, who also chairs the regional government, defended the cost and said it was important to get unbiased information.

"The conclusion that I heard in the presentation is that what we're doing today probably cannot be done for the future in the fact there are some inherent risks," he said.

Lowe said local politicians will now examine the cost of different types of treatment. The most current government estimate, from 2000, placed costs in excess of \$447 million for two treatment plants.

The federal Conservative government has since said it would chip in one-third of the funding, with the province and municipalities expected to split the rest.

"I have always stated that with the federal and provincial assistance we should go forward and have at least a secondary treatment facility," said Lowe. "If there's money on the table from the other levels of government today we should probably be looking at it."

© 2006 The Daily News (Prince Rupert)

Illustration:

• Photo: Mr. Floatie, James Skwarok, speaks to the media following Dr. Bill Stubblefield speaking at the release of the SETAC report . Stubblefield is the chair of the SETAC review panel.

Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 409 words



JOEL CONNELLY

Monday, July 17, 2006

Panel pulls the plug on Victoria sewage policy

By [JOEL CONNELLY](#)
P-I COLUMNIST

Writing about Victoria's dumping of raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, this scribe has grown used to condescending, Brit-accented voices putting out the party line: The solution to pollution is dilution.

Local officialdom in British Columbia's touristy capital have treated an international waterway as a toilet. They argued that no one of respectability could dispute the "scientific" justification of sending 31 million gallons of untreated effluent into it each day.

A luncheon of San Juan County Republicans, some years back, heard -- with disbelief -- Victoria officials flatly deny that discharged pollutants could ever reach the surface of the strait.

The official rationales are now, pardon the phrase, down the toilet.

In diplomatic but damning language, a study by the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) -- commissioned by the Capital Regional District -- concluded last week that Victoria can't just keep dumping raw, toxic effluent.

"Scientific risk concerns, public values and the prevailing regulatory climate argue for the (district) to improve the overall quality of its discharged wastewater," the panel found.

"Relying on the dilution and natural dispersion processes of the Strait of Juan de Fuca is not a long-term answer to wastewater disposal, especially considering the growth predicted for the (district) and adjacent communities."

Used to stonewalling bureaucrats deploying experts in their in-depth defense, Christianne Wilhemson of the Georgia Strait Alliance could not hide her pleasure at what the independent scientists concluded.

"To my knowledge, a Capital Regional District-sponsored report has never been critical," Wilhemson said.

"Essentially, they poked holes in everything the Capital Regional District has been touting as the way to deal with sewage and protect human health and the environment."

An example: Take the claim that San Juan Republicans greeted with skepticism.

Victoria-area officials have claimed for years that fast currents quickly disperse the millions of gallons discharged daily from the Clover and Macaulay Point discharge pipes.

David Anderson, Victoria's member of Parliament and longtime Canadian Cabinet minister, once took umbrage at a candy bar joke told by a New York Times reporter appearing on KCTS' old "Seattle Week in Review" program.

The independent scientists of SETAC affirmed that effluents are rapidly diluted and transported away from the pipes.

They added, however, there is not a "complete understanding" of what happens to the effluents, and where the stuff goes, once discharged into the "Strait of Juan de Poopa."

"There is conclusive chemical, microbiological and observational evidence that, under certain environmental conditions, the diluted sewage plumes or their constituents reach the ocean's surface," the report said.

In short, even if the Columbia River at Hood River is still, don't plan to go wind surfing off Clover or Macaulay Points.

The scientific panel found diplomatic language to deliver exactly that advice.

"Despite the uncertainty and the perceived infrequency of exposure, data indicate that when the diluted plume (and therefore bacteria) does come to the water's surface, persons exposed to the water are at increased risk for adverse health effects," they wrote.

The scientists also found "numerous gaps" in the Capital Regional District's much-touted marine monitoring program.

The panel noted another major gap. As capital of a province one writer dubbed "Lotus Land," Victoria and its neighboring communities are experiencing a major growth in population.

"Because of its desirability as a city, Victoria's population will no doubt increase substantially in the future," the scientists wrote.

"This increase will result in a concomitant increase in sewage load to the wastewater systems ...

"The panel concludes that the environmental 'footprint' of the wastewater discharges will increase proportionately with an increase in volumes of discharged wastes."

The Sierra Legal Defense Fund, which issues a sewage "report card" for Canadian cities every four years, has raised issues of growth and monitoring gaps -- and been ridiculed.

"The rationales have, finally, been put to rout," said Devon Page of Sierra's Vancouver office.

What now? Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe, who is also chairman of the Capital Regional District, put out a mushy statement.

"We all know there are some who would like us to make a decision immediately," he said. "While I understand these concerns, it is important we look at all facets of the sewage issue."

It was the kind of stuff that flies could buzz around. Hizzoner was a little more forthcoming in the Times-Colonist newspaper, promising to "go forward and have at least a secondary treatment facility."

The Canadian government has promised to pay one-third the cost.

But not a peep has come from one key player-payer, the British Columbia government.

It's time for Gov. Christine Gregoire to call Premier Gordon Campbell and urge, well, movement.

End note: Can't let the week go by without noting the hilarious title atop a White House press release: "President Bush's Strong Record of Addressing Climate Change."

P-I columnist Joel Connelly can be reached at 206-448-8160 or joelconnelly@seattlepi.com.

OakBayNEWS

Sewage report finally out

By Brennan Clarke
Oak Bay News
Jul 14 2006

For those expecting the consultant's report on sewage treatment to trigger the immediate construction of a sewage treatment plant for the region, the report's release on Wednesday fell somewhat short of expectation.

However, the \$600,000 study clearly stated that dumping raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca is "not a long-term answer to waste disposal" and warned that population growth and emerging federal standards will make improved sewage treatment a necessity in the coming years.

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Ken's Commentary: Hey Victoria, Clean Up Your Act!

July 17, 2006

By [Ken Schram](#)

SEATTLE - "Mr. Floatie" was right there in the front row.

As the scientists from British Columbia's Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry presented their report to the sewer board, there was "Mr. Floatie."

By all reports, he looked rather resplendent.

Well, as resplendent as someone dressed up to look like human waste can look.

Anyway, I'm all for "Mr. Floatie" protesting the fact that the city of Victoria, British Columbia continues to dump 34 million gallons of raw sewage a day into the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

That's a lot of "little floaties" swirling about.

City officials up in that quaint Canadian hamlet have never really been bothered about using the world as their toilet before.

They've long resisted the call to build a sewage treatment plant, opting instead for the simplistic "out of sight, out of mind" approach.

But with the 2010 Winter Olympics heading up that way, city officials may be on the cusp of becoming more civic minded.

Seems hypocrisy knows no bounds, meaning that while fecal coliform bacteria in the water where the waste emerges is at astronomical levels, what's now motivating Victoria officials is the prospect of bad publicity with the Olympics on the way.

So, thanks, "Mr. Floatie."

You did good.

Want to share your thoughts with Ken Schram? You can e-mail him at kenschram@komo4news.com



Video : KOMO 4 NEWS

The city continues to dump 34 million gallons of raw sewage a day into the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

 [Ken's Commentary](#)

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And be sure to catch Ken Schram and John Carlson on their new radio show, "THE COMMENTATORS." Airing Monday through Friday, from 10 till noon on KOMO 1000, Ken and John will be delving into news of the day offering their own particular brand of insight and perspective - with a healthy dose of irreverence and humor thrown in for good measure.



Strait of Juan de Poopa may finally get cleaned up

My colleague Joel Connelly has been having fun with the story of Victoria's dumping of millions of gallons a day of raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, a practice wags have pilloried by transforming the waterway's name into the Strait of Juan de Poopa.

Last week Joel [told us of Mr. Floatie](#), the protester who has taken to dressing up like a turd. And [today he recounts](#) the advice of a science panel organized by the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry in a column that, while a little lighter on the frivolity, ends with this gem:

It's time for Gov. Christine Gregoire to call Premier Gordon Campbell and urge, well, movement.

[If you like your news about poop a little more serious, check out this account](#) from the Canadian Press.

The basic conclusion: We don't really know where this stuff goes or what kind of damage it does. Kinda gives you a sinking feeling, if you know what I mean.

Posted by [Robert McClure](#) Robert McClure at July 17, 2006 11:03 p.m.

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07/18/2006: "Some Hope for Victoria Sewage Treatment Plan"

Environmental groups in Canada strongly support the findings of a recently released Scientific and Technical Review of the Greater Victoria region's waste management plan, and are pressing for urgent action. [Links to Past Stories](#)

According to Georgia Strait Alliance, 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.



Tuesday, July 18, 2006

Sewage Treatment: Victoria's secret

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER EDITORIAL BOARD

If the arrival of the 2010 winter Olympic Games in British Columbia were not enough to motivate Victoria's elected officials to finally address the public relations -- not to mention public health -- problems with the island's practice of dumping raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, perhaps the conclusion of a scientific panel will be.

The independent panel told the government last week that dumping 31 million gallons a day of raw sewage into the international waterway is no longer a good long-range strategy for the British Columbia capital.

Well, duh.

"We know that there are some who would like us to make a decision immediately," Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe said last week.

"Immediately"?

Critics, notably P-I columnist Joel Connelly, have been condemning the practice for at least the past 15 years. This newspaper has asked Victoria to make the decision to not defecate into our shared waterway for almost that long. We thought progress had been made in 1993 when officials there promised a "commitment" to primary and secondary wastewater treatment over the next quarter century.

Victoria and provincial officials ought to move more quickly, lest the Olympics' global spotlight fall on the disgrace of human effluent floating in waters we share with beautiful British Columbia.



SOUND OFF

Tell us what's on your mind.

▶▶ [Read 6 comments and post your own now!](#)

Sewage Treatment: Victoria's secret

P-I Editorial: Victoria and provincial officials ought to move more quickly, lest the Olympics' global spotlight fall on the disgrace of human effluent floating off beautiful British Columbia.

Tell us what's on your mind.

#51785

Posted by **SoldierMedic** at 7/17/06 8:07 p.m.

Gross

[Report violation](#)

#51813

Posted by **spirit** at 7/18/06 5:55 a.m.

Time for some "splainin." Popular sentiment and political will have combined with a "survey" that says it's not "good" to dump increasing gallons of sewage into the Straight for ever. The PI and it's Eco-oppressor friends tell us that "this is science."

Fact is that this is the "endangered salmon" and "Orca" science; the "global warming" science; and the "hole in the ozone science." Worse is that this is the same "LAW" that the left-wing extremists on the Supreme Court follow to legislate their feelings into law.

This might be a comedy if these children didn't use the above science to erase our constitutional rights and freedoms. In fact, Canada is a democracy. And BC people care little about sewage treatment BECAUSE there is no science to convince them.

Liberals were not lazy at the start. Today they are lazy liars and oppressors. Connelly can do the heavy lifting by stopping the "science" lie, so that political will can be generated to tax the Victorians so that they can treat their sewage. But no, Connelly stays lazy by asking the PI to abet oppressing the democratic Canadians.

All this is perverse while we hear the every Hezbollah and Hamas murderer and terrorist must be GIVEN extra-constitutional rights and protections. Seems that criminals, terrorists, tyrants, despots, and oppressors are Democrat constituents, while the people are just plain stupid.

Better start "splainin" before November, Dudes!!!!

[Report violation](#)

#51817

Posted by **Dr. Smoke** at 7/18/06 6:35 a.m.

spirit, you are actually a leftist trying to make the right look silly and crazed, aren't you.

On the poll, I filed a protest vote of "Don't know or care", because the question is so dumb.

[Report violation](#)

#51831

Posted by **Rhonwyn** at 7/18/06 7:28 a.m.

I have had friends sitting on a beach near Victoria, BC when a tampon washed up on shore. The US has cleaned up its port cities on the Strait of Juan de Fuca it is time for Canada to do the same.

Personally, I intend to boycott Victoria until they clean up their act. Victoria was a place we took a lot of out-of-state vistors and family memebers but no more. They will get no more of my money. I'll keep my money in Seattle.

[Report violation](#)

#51850

Posted by **A Lonely Centrist** at 7/18/06 8:09 a.m.

At times, it seems unfair to US trade, interests, etc., to impose a lot of environmental controls that we have here in the U.S. while both of our neighbors continue to dump raw sewage into waterways. The costs associated with good stewardship can seem extraordinary in this era of NAFTA and open borders.

But I wouldn't want my children to deal with the crap (literally) that Canadian children have to.

[Report violation](#)

#51943

Posted by **Dr. Smoke** at 7/18/06 11:46 a.m.

"Sewage Treatment: Victoria's secret"

Great title by the way, PI.

[Report violation](#)