

Friday » November
16 » 2007

Minister defends sewage decision

Times Colonist

Friday, November 16, 2007

I couldn't disagree more with David Anderson's column questioning the B.C. government's decision to require Greater Victoria to start treating its sewage.

In 2006, I directed the Capital Regional District to submit an amendment to its Core Area Liquid Waste Management Plan detailing a fixed schedule for the provision of sewage treatment.

Every year, more than 40 billion litres of untreated sewage is discharged into Juan de Fuca Strait through two outfalls, one at Clover Point and one at Macaulay Point.

Research conducted in 2006 by an independent scientific panel concluded that population growth makes the natural dilution approach unsustainable. In addition, another study by the Ministry of Environment found that the seabed near the outfalls was contaminated and that even outside of the initial dilution zone, water-quality guidelines were not being met.

Our government's decision to require treatment was based on both those reports.

The provincial and federal governments have each made a commitment to provide one-third of the funding for the cost of sewage treatment.

To ensure the best value for taxpayers, B.C.'s contribution is contingent upon Partnerships B.C.'s evaluation of how this project could be delivered using a public-private partnership.

The scientific evidence is clear that it's time for our provincial capital to implement sewage treatment, just like other cities in B.C.

Barry Penner,

Minister of Environment.

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