



Victoria Harbor By Bobak Ha'Eri, via Wikimedia Commons

# Would you poop in this harbor?

Grossly enough, the answer is YES if you are a resident of Victoria, B.C, which is far behind the times when it comes to the treatment of their waste. The system in place does little to clean wastewater aside from filtering it through 6mm screens before funneling it into the ocean. This 'treatment' applies to human, chemical, and industrial waste. While some attempt to minimize the impacts of dumping sewage into the ocean because of dilution, evidence suggests that the quality of the local marine ecosystem is suffering from the current system.

## VICTORIA NEEDS BETTER WASTE WATER TREATMENT

### Current outflow sites



Image from peninsuladailynews.com

### Facts:

- 130 million liters of untreated sewage daily
- Over 86% of CRD residents support treatment
- Victoria is the only city along the Strait of Juan de Fuca that does not treat its sewage



Image from Ecojustice.ca

### It's not just about poo

Aside from the "ew" factor associated with dumping of waste into the ocean, there are serious threats and concerns linked to chemical pollutants. Prescription drugs and toxins are also part of what is being put in drains and are not filtered out with the current system. After a heavy rain storm drains containing oil, lead, mercury hydrocarbons, antifreeze, detergents and pesticides find their way into the ocean. Many of these chemicals are persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) which travel through the food web.

### Toxic effects

- Local waters are suffering from pollution.
- 17 toxic compounds near release sites exceed regulated limits
- 60 square km closure of shellfish harvesting near outflow sites

Victoria's neighbors who share the Strait of Juan de Fuca are tired of waiting for the city to change. For instance, Washington state's governor is upset that it has taken the province over 20 years to implement the agreed upon changes. Additionally, the British Columbia Ministry of Environment REQUIRES that Victoria change its sewage treatment by 2020 and has even agreed to cover 1/3 of the cost.

### Policy:

The Capital Regional District (CRD) has outlined a plan that involves a new treatment plant that would resolve the current issue.



Image from timescolonist.com

### The Plan includes:

- Preliminary treatment in place now
- Primary treatment to remove oil, grease and solids
- Secondary biological treatment of wastewater to remove organic substances using bacteria that will use them as food. Bacteria and water are then separated before water is released into the strait.

### Recommendation:

A 2006 review published by the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry showed that treatment will substantially reduce chemical pollutants. Additional studies confirmed that 50-90% of EDCs will be removed with secondary waste treatment.

The annual cost to households will be similar to what other Canadian cities pay for sewage treatment. There is no reason not to build a secondary treatment facility. Lack of action will result in the diminishment of Victoria's most valuable asset: the ocean waters.



Wastewater outfall. Theepochtimes.com

## It's time Victoria realized dilution is not the solution

### References

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