

north shore news

LETTER: Something smelly about sewage rules

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

Re: Human Sewage Regulations.

As a 30-year North Shore resident who now spends a lot of time near Merritt, I am reaching out for support from cities about an environmental travesty that is occurring in rural areas.

The Nicola Valley is being inundated with sewage sludge (the leftovers of waste water treatment plants, containing fecal coliform, heavy metals and other noxious substances). The sludge (aka bio-solids) is disposed of in rural communities by private contractors engaged by municipalities and districts to take it away.

Under the dumbed-down provincial Organic Matter Recycling Regulation, a private contractor can operate in secrecy, with no requirement to let people nearby know what it proposes to do, give notice, post its plans or consult.

Nor is there a licensing procedure, whereby government issues a permit for a private contractor to apply sludge to agricultural land. All the contractor has to do is to file an "application plan," and 30 days later the trucks of sludge can start arriving.

With staff cutbacks, there is no routine government monitoring of the operation. Somebody has to complain first. This means the contractor is free to dispose greater quantities of sludge, and sludge of higher concentrations of fecal coliform and heavy metals than outlined in the plan.

Imagine your home transformed forever . . . contamination of surface water, ground water, well drinking water, soil, air, plus noise pollution and the unrelenting stink of human waste, next door to you. Thirty days. No notice. No consultation. No teeth in the regulations to protect you.

The Capital Regional District (Victoria), like many European nations, has banned the land application of bio-solids within its boundaries and is constructing an incinerator to dispose of its hazardous waste. Why isn't the provincial government building incinerators around the province?

Surely the safe disposal of sewer sludge is a function of government, not to be privatized so that sludge is dumped on any old community, to the extreme detriment of residents. The laws permitting contracting out of this public health function should be repealed, and safe disposal mechanisms established by government — isn't this what we pay our taxes for?

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West Vancouver

What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking [here \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter) or post a comment below.

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