

north shore news

Treatment plant awaits more provincial funds

\$700M project mandated by feds to be online by 2020

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A photo illustration shows how the Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant below Norgate will look. The federal government has mandated its completion by 2020. image supplied

Will the provincial government throw money down the toilet this election season?

With the timely completion of the Lions Gate wastewater treatment plant hanging in the balance, that's what City of North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto is hoping for.

In order to abide by federal regulations, the new \$700-million sewage treatment plant must be operational by New Year's Eve, 2020. To meet that deadline, an infusion of cash from the province is needed by February at the very latest, according to Mussatto, who also serves as chairman of the Metro Vancouver utilities committee.

The three North Shore municipalities have favoured dividing the plant's bill equally among the federal government, the provincial government, and the municipalities.

The provincial government recently put \$148.5 million toward a fund that includes wastewater. However, even if the entire sum went to the Lions Gate facility, it would still be nearly \$85 million less than what the North Shore municipalities called for.

If there's more money coming, it will likely arrive when the provincial government can enjoy a "political benefit," Mussatto said.

"You'd rather announce it closer to the election," he said. "Any party would do that."

While funding for the plant hasn't been confirmed, it hasn't been denied, either, according to Mussatto.

While the mayor said he's "very hopeful" the province will make a financial commitment, he explained there is a "drop-dead date" for funding once the writ of election is issued.

With the next provincial election set for May 9, the writ would likely drop by March 19, barring any further funding announcements until after the election.

The bulk of the construction would need to take place in 2018 to get the plant up and flushing by the end of 2020, according to Mussatto.

Without provincial funding, paying for the plant would take "pretty much all" of the city's budget, he added.

The federal government has committed \$212 million for the plant, approximately \$21 million shy of municipal expectations.

Because the plant was initially projected to cost \$420 million, two West Vancouver councillors previously expressed concerns about the plant's budget ballooning beyond \$700 million.

However, the \$700-million price tag incorporated inflation, according to Mussatto, who said the figure remains accurate.

The plant is slated to be sandwiched between McKeen Avenue and West First Street in the District of North Vancouver, approximately two kilometres east of the old plant on Bridge Road in West Vancouver.

The Bridge Road facility has been repeatedly expanded since opening in 1961, enabling it to handle more than 30-billion litres of wastewater annually, discharging treated wastewater into Burrard Inlet.

The new plant would incorporate a second level of treatment, using ultraviolet light and a chemical compound similar to household bleach to take 90 per cent of dissolved substances out of the water. The current treatment removes between 30 and 40 per cent of dissolved material.

The design calls for zero odour, but as waste is broken down, the plant may emit biogas exhaust, which can affect air quality. However, the air is set to go through a scrubbing system before being discharged.

The plant includes plans for an effluent heat recovery system.

The Bridge Road treatment plant, located just west of the Lions Gate Bridge, is on leased land that is scheduled to revert back to the Squamish Nation when the facility is decommissioned by 2021.