



Liberal Jonathan Wilkinson

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North Vancouver's ticking tax bomb

Sewage is not generally a vote-getter.

This may be why North Vancouver's current Member of Parliament is not talking much publicly about the ticking tax bomb that is the Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The plant provides only primary sewage treatment – state of the art in the 60's. Today, the minimum standard in Canada is secondary treatment. And getting there is expensive - \$700 million for the Lions Gate facility.

The pressure is on because the federal government has mandated that the new facility be built by 2020.

But the lack of a funding commitment from that same federal government is a key reason why the project is now in danger of missing the 2020 deadline if construction does not begin soon.

Potential for "significant" tax increase

North Vancouver City Mayor Darrell Mussatto says that if Ottawa and Victoria do not commit soon to their one-third each share of the plant upgrade, District and City ratepayers will be stuck with a "significant" property tax increase in a few short years – in the range of hundreds of dollars each year for the average North Vancouver household.

Mayor Mussatto, who also chairs Metro Vancouver's Utilities Committee, says Metro has been waiting for Ottawa's response for about a year now.

There was hope that the Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant would be a beneficiary of Stephen Harper's pre-election fury of spending announcements. But, again - it would appear – sewage is not generally a vote-getter.

Part of a pattern

North Vancouver resident Don Mavinic,

a UBC civil engineering professor and one of Canada's leading experts on wastewater treatment, pollution control and resource recovery, says the Harper Government's funding silence on the Lions Gate plant is part of a pattern.

"The environment is not a priority on the infrastructure shopping list for the Conservatives," he says.

At the same time, Professor Mavinic worries that deep funding cuts to Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries have eliminated the capacity of federal scientists to monitor how Metro Vancouver's sewage pollution is affecting our ocean waters.

Under the radar

This is an issue that has been flying under the radar in North Vancouver for too long.

Sticking North Vancouver property taxpayers with the entire bill for a new Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant is unfair and unacceptable.

Subjecting our local marine environment to the outflow of obsolete 1960's wastewater treatment technology is wrong and dangerous.

Yesterday, Justin Trudeau announced a Liberal government will make the largest new infrastructure investment in Canadian history – including green infrastructure like wastewater facilities.

Finally – a promise of real leadership from Ottawa. One that can diffuse North Vancouver's ticking tax bomb, spur our local economy and protect our coastal waters.

Jonathan Wilkinson is North Vancouver's Liberal candidate in the upcoming Federal election. He is a Rhodes Scholar, former clean-tech CEO and North Shore soccer coach

Authorized by the official agent for Jonathan Wilkinson.

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