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## Wading Kelly says Black Rock Beach ready for swimmers

By EVA HOARE Staff Reporter

Come on in, the water's fine.

He wasn't in his bathing suit, but that was Halifax Mayor Peter Kelly's message Friday about the now-healthy state of Halifax Harbour.

The mayor rolled up his suit trousers and waded into the water at Black Rock Beach after learning of safe bacteria levels at two of the city's swimming areas.

"I went up to my knees," Kelly said a few hours after testing the waters at Black Rock, bordering Point Pleasant Park. "I had on my suit. You can see down to the bottom, so it's very, very clean."

And now that all three of the region's sewage treatment plants are online, the mayor plans to shed his suit and tie in favour of swim trunks for a beach party to welcome back the public to popular sunbathing spots.

"I am going to go all the way in, over (my) head."

Details are still being worked out, but the mayor said a bash should take place soon.

"We are having an official swim, hopefully in the next week or two. We just have to get the logistics out of the way."

The latest test results taken Wednesday show fecal coliform levels well below swimming guidelines, coming in at five bacterial colony-forming units per 100 millilitres at Dingle Beach and 4 cfu/100 ml at Black Rock Beach. Acceptable levels are 200 cfu/100 ml, the mayor said.

"It needs to be under 200, so it's fantastic," Kelly said.

"Over last week and over the weekend, I was along the waterfront. The jellyfish are back, which means the water is clean."

The beaches have been cleaned and new sand has been brought in to Black Rock, so there's nothing afoot to hurt anyone, said Kelly.

"It's clean. There's no smell. People are there, just happy to be able to enjoy the beach once

again."

Swimming areas at Black Rock and the Dingle will be supervised, a city news release said Friday.

The water is even cleaner than before because all three sewage treatment plants are working, the mayor said.

There will now be a legacy at these longtime swimming spots that "we can all be proud to pass onto our children," Kelly said in the release.

But swimmers still should stay away from taking dips for about three days after heavy rains, during which time floatables are screened out but waste water overflows go into the harbour without receiving full treatment, the release said.

After the volume is reduced, full treatment resumes and water samples will be taken to ensure coliform levels are safe.

One of the three Harbour Solutions Project treatment plants, the \$54-million facility along the Halifax waterfront, officially opened in February 2008. But 11 months later, a malfunction flooded the site, shutting it down.

Environment Canada is probing the sewage problem, caused by a power failure in the neighbourhood in January 2009, under the Fisheries Act. Insurance has covered the majority of the \$10 million it cost to bring the Halifax plant back online, said Kelly.

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