

Sewage plant 'fully operational'

Beaches to reopen after water quality tests show areas safe for swimming

By Our Staff

Halifax's sewage treatment plant is repaired.

The plant has been back in full operation for at least a week and a half, a Halifax Water spokesman said Thursday.

It recently went through a testing phase and "the (treatment) system is running now," James Campbell said.

The \$54-million waste-water plant malfunctioned in January 2009 during a flood that was prompted by a power failure in the downtown neighbourhood in which it is situated.

"It's running as it should be running," said Campbell. "They'll keep monitoring it . . . but the plant is essentially fully operational."

The 2009 malfunction meant the largest of metro's three new sewage plants, part of the \$333-million Harbour Solutions project, was knocked out of commission. The breakdown is being investigated by Ottawa, under the Fisheries Act, and charges are still possible.

Metro residents and business operators had been given various estimated times of resurrection with respect to the plant's repair work. Halifax Water officials and Mayor Peter Kelly said the facility was due to reopen this spring.

In March, the mayor expressed hope that the sewage plant could be completely rehabilitated by the end of May. The latest target area was late this month or early July.

Campbell said the last piece of the repair job was to install an ultraviolet light disinfection system in stages.

"The UV light system started going in about two weeks ago," he said.

Cost of the 17-month resurrection is about \$11 million. Most of that is provided by an insurance policy covering the plant.

More than a year after Environment Canada began looking into citizen complaints about the breakdown, the agency hasn't finished its investigation or decided on charges.

A couple of supervised beaches at Halifax Harbour are to be reopened after water quality tests show they're safe for swimming.

Campbell said water sampling is to begin today.

"It usually takes a few days to get the results," he said.

A media tour of the refurbished plant is in the works, but no date has been set, Campbell said.

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