

Our harbour is a treasure beyond value.

It's a leading tourist attraction; a vital international gateway; an essential economic engine; and a major regional centrepiece.

What lies beneath the waves of this world-renowned natural resource is of equal importance because our harbour is home to a variety of marine life, creatures like the Atlantic cod, mackerel, herring, skate, crab, lobster sunfish and seahorses.



By authorizing the massive Harbour Solutions Project, Halifax Regional Council has taken a leadership role in protecting this wonderful asset at our doorstep.

The \$333-million undertaking is actually a two-pronged approach to resolving the problem of effluent entering our harbour. One focuses on diverting and recycling as much of the waste as possible; the other involves the safe disposal of what can't be completely recovered.

As most of you know, HRM contracted with D&D WaterSolutions Inc. to design and construct three new wastewater treatment facilities in co-operation with Dexter Harbour Solutions who designed and constructed a wastewater collection system, new pumping stations, kilometres of new piping and related infrastructure. Further, we contracted with N-Viro Canada to design, construct and operate a biosolids processing facility.

The Halifax plant came on line in November, 2007, and the Dartmouth plant began treating wastewater the following July. The results were impressive and you'll recall it

wasn't long before the beaches at Black Rock and the Dingle Park were reopened to swimmers, including me, for the first time in decades.

Then came the unfortunate malfunction at the Halifax plant last January. Yes, it was a set-back but Council's vision for a better tomorrow hasn't been derailed. Repairs are well advanced and we're on track to be fully operational again next spring. Meanwhile, let's keep in mind the Dartmouth plant is still running and work on the treatment system at the Herring Cove facility is making great strides. The equipment there is now being tested using fresh water and wastewater trials aren't far behind.

While we're talking about positives, let's remember the kilometre-long tunnel which was dug under Upper and Lower Water Streets as part of the Harbour Solutions Project. The tunnel acts as a holding tank to reduce flows during heavy rain which, in turn, cuts down on actual sewage overflows.

And further, let's not forget there are 13 wastewater treatment facilities throughout HRM, including one at Mill Cove in Bedford and another in Eastern Passage, both of them in operation since the 1970s. (The Mill Cove plant has had two expansions and there's provision for a third; in Eastern Passage, tenders will soon be called to expand the size of that facility and increase its capacity.)

The new wastewater treatment plants in Halifax, Dartmouth and Herring Cove incorporate advanced-primary wastewater treatment technology which removes up to 70 per cent of the suspended solids. After going through the treatment process, the residual organic matter in turn is trucked for further processing at the Biosolids Processing Facility at the Aerotech Business Park, near the airport.

This material then becomes a valuable organic resource and an important component of the Harbour Solutions Project. HRM uses this organic material for a beneficial purpose, just like we do with our green cart and recyclables programs.

There's one more important step in the whole Harbour Solutions process, namely the disinfection of the wastewater before it leaves the plants. High-intensity ultra-violet lights are used to kill bacteria in these treated flows before they're released into the harbour through outflow pipes, one of which stretches for a kilometre.

We have a lot of good news to anticipate, come next spring when the Harbour Solutions Project is up and running smoothly. In the meantime, please remember that what's been built is designed to protect our beautiful harbour from human waste. We all need to play our own part in all this, by *not* pouring medicines, paints, solvents or other hazardous materials down the sink, toilet or storm drain.

Will the quality of our harbour water soon return to that of the summer of 2008? Will our beaches open again? Will our children and their children have a cleaner, healthier future? Absolutely!

In fact, keep those bathing suits handy because, come the spring, it'll be time for another dip!

*[] I'd welcome your input on this and any other HRM items of interest. Reach me here at City Hall at [kellyp@halifax.ca](mailto:kellyp@halifax.ca) or by phoning 490-4010.*

