

What dirty harbour? Halifax reopens beaches



Dozens of people walk into Dingle Beach in Halifax after it was cleaned up and reopened on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2008.

CTV.ca News Staff

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Halifax's mayor personally tested the waters at two newly reopened beaches Saturday, more than 30 years after they were shut down because of the city's infamously polluted harbour.

It took roughly \$333 million to clean up the area and, as Mayor Peter Kelly noted, constant pressure from citizens.

"We owe them the gratitude, the appreciation for telling us, 'Just get the work done, stop the talk and walk the walk, get the harbour cleaned up and let us enjoy what we used to be able to enjoy,'" Kelly told CTV Atlantic.

The mayor donned his bathing suit and jumped into the water at Black Rock Beach, located near Point Pleasant Park in the city's south end. He also swam at

Dingle Beach on the harbour's Northwest Arm.

"I've had no issues, no skin issues, any issues whatsoever, so if I can do it anybody can do it," Kelly told reporters.

Factories had been dumping sewage into the harbour for 250 years. But nine months ago, the first of three waste water treatment facilities began cleaning up the water.

"Less than a month or two after the Halifax plant came online, the water quality results were dramatic," said James Campbell, communications manager of the Harbour Solutions Project. "It was getting safe for swimming."

Kelly said the reopened swimming areas meet national standards and he encouraged Haligonians to dive in. Many children, including Calee Whitehead, took up his offer on Saturday.

"The water was actually really nice," Whitehead told CTV Atlantic -- the water temperature at Dingle was about 10 degrees Celsius. "I thought it would be cold but it was OK."

Lifeguard Shelley Haynes said she was just thankful to have more beaches opened within the Halifax Regional Municipality. She said officials would be monitoring the cleanliness at Black Rock and Dingle just like any other public swimming areas in Canada.

"We test the water weekly and guard it just like any other beach," she said. "This puts us at 25 beaches within the HRM."

With a report by CTV Atlantic's Nathan Coleman in Halifax and files from The Canadian Press