

Municipal system to accept ferry sewage

Too expensive to treat waste onboard vessels

BY SANDOR GYARMATI, THE DELTA OPTIMIST APRIL 24, 2010



Federal legislation requiring B.C. Ferries to upgrade its onboard treatment systems comes with such a cost the Crown corporation has opted to hook into the municipal sewage system.

Photograph by: file photo, submitted

Delta is giving its approval for B.C. Ferries to build a sewage storage facility at the Tsawassen ferry terminal, where ship waste would then be pumped into the municipal sewage system.

B.C. Ferries made the request to Delta over a year ago to build the storage facility where waste would be stored during the day and pumped into Delta's municipal collection system overnight.

The request came after the federal government enacted new regulations requiring B.C. Ferries to upgrade onboard treatment systems. Ferries previously had a long-running practice of dumping sewage into the ocean.

According to the Crown corporation, the estimated capital cost of upgrading onboard treatment systems is more than \$3 million for each of the four vessels based at Tsawwassen, with high operation and maintenance costs.

A Metro Vancouver staff report to the regional sewage and drainage district, chaired by Delta Mayor Lois Jackson, noted B.C. Ferries also says there's a lack of available space to construct a land-based treatment plant at the Tsawwassen terminal.

The alternative was then devised to store ferry waste during the day and pump it into Delta's sewer system. Metro Vancouver's analysis of the proposed plan shows there would not be a significant impact on the regional district's sewage treatment plant at Annacis Island.

B.C. Ferries and Delta reached a memorandum of agreement on the proposal this year and it was on the agenda for endorsement by the regional district's sewage and drainage committee April 23 meeting.

Because the deal also involves the Tsawwassen First Nation, the arrangement can't be finalized until the TFN becomes a member of the regional sewage and drainage district. A report will come forward to the Metro board of directors regarding the TFN's membership.

B.C. Ferries is also working out arrangements with the District of North Saanich and the Nanaimo Regional District to pump ashore waste at the Swartz Bay and Departure Bay terminals on Vancouver Island.