



September 22, 2021

Mayor Al Siebring  
North Cowichan  
7030 Trans-Canada Highway  
Duncan, BC V9L 6A1

Dear Mayor Al Siebring:

**Re: Regular Pumping Out of Septic Tanks to Support Health of Water Bodies**

Thank you for your letter dated September 13, 2021 regarding impacts to water bodies from sewerage systems that may not be functioning as intended. We agree that failing sewerage systems are both a health and environmental hazard, and look forward to engaging with North Cowichan in the future to explore strategies that will reduce these impacts.

Unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to fully engage in this discussion, as our resources are currently focused on responding to the ongoing COVID pandemic. Once our capacity becomes available we would like to meet and discuss strategies to address these matters.

Scheduled pumping out of septic tanks is an essential part of sewerage system maintenance. A well maintained system will work as designed to effectively treat domestic sewage prior to entering into the receiving environment. Regular maintenance can also increase the lifespan of a sewerage system and save home owners costly repairs, while protecting the environment.

Historically, Island Health has collaborated with the Capital Regional District (CRD) and the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) on such initiatives as the "Septic Savvy" or "Septic Smart" respectively, educational material and the CRD Onsite Sewage System Maintenance Bylaw (Bylaw No.: 3479). Both of these initiatives encourage or require regular scheduled pump outs, along with other maintenance procedures.

The Township of Langley passed Bylaw No.: 5382, *Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw*, which specifies different requirements for on-site systems based on "areas of potential NO<sub>3</sub>-N (Nitrate-Nitrogen) contamination concern". "An improperly functioning sewerage system can result in excessive ammonium/ ammonia or nitrates discharged to the soil, where it can flow to groundwater or surface water and cause problems" (Washington State Department of Health, 2014).

Routine environmental monitoring for fecal indicator organisms in recreational waters or storm collection drains in conjunction with trace dye testing of structures generating domestic sewage can assist in identifying areas of concern. Any properties of concern regarding health hazards can be reported to the Island Health, Health Protection & Environmental Services (HPES) Office located at Round Building Health Unit, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 238 Government Street, Duncan, BC V9L 1A5, Phone/Fax: 250-737-2010/250-737-2008 or emailed to [HPES.duncan@viha.ca](mailto:HPES.duncan@viha.ca).

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**Gateway Village Health Unit**

201 - 771 Vernon Avenue | Victoria, BC V8X 5A7  
Email: [Gateway\\_office@viha.ca](mailto:Gateway_office@viha.ca)

Tel: 250.519.3401 | Fax: 250.519.3402  
[www.islandhealth.ca](http://www.islandhealth.ca)

Excellent health and care, for everyone, everywhere, every time.

Lastly, in areas of high population density relying on ground water supplies for domestic drinking water purposes this office would encourage investigating municipal sewer options under the *Environmental Management Act* (EMA) and Municipal Wastewater Regulation (MWR).

We hope these resources can provide your office with the tools to begin working on these strategies and we look forward to working with you when resources are available.

Feel free to contact the undersigned at 250.519.3465 if you have any questions regarding these matters.

Sincerely,



Rory Beise  
Land Use/Drinking Water Consultant

RB/cmd

cc: Leah Hollins, Board Chair, Island Health  
Dr. Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer, Duncan Round Building Health Unit  
Cole Diplock, Regional Manager, Nanaimo Metral Drive Office  
Craig Nowakowski, Supervisor, Victoria Gateway Office  
Heather Hutton, Temp. Team Lead Environmental Health, Duncan Round Building Health Unit

Resources for some of the content in this letter can be found at the following websites:

BC Municipal Wastewater Regulation (MWR):  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/waste-discharge-authorization>

CRD Septic Savvy: <https://www.crd.bc.ca/education/stormwater-wastewater-septic/at-home/protecting-septic-system>

CRD Bylaw No.: 3479: [https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/bylaws/liquidwasteseptagesewersourcecontrolandstormwater/3479---onsite-sewage-system-maintenance-bylaw-2007B.pdf?sfvrsn=3cc83e72\\_0](https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/bylaws/liquidwasteseptagesewersourcecontrolandstormwater/3479---onsite-sewage-system-maintenance-bylaw-2007B.pdf?sfvrsn=3cc83e72_0)

RDN Septic Smart: <https://www.rdn.bc.ca/septicmart>

Township of Langley Bylaw No.: 5382:  
[https://webfiles.tol.ca/Bylaws/Development%20Bylaws/Development//Subdivision%20and%20Development%20Servicing%20Bylaw%202019%20\(No.%205382\).pdf](https://webfiles.tol.ca/Bylaws/Development%20Bylaws/Development//Subdivision%20and%20Development%20Servicing%20Bylaw%202019%20(No.%205382).pdf)

Washington State Department of Health: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/4450/337-142-Nitrogen-Removal-from-OSS-FactSheet.pdf>