

October 23rd Tour with the Minister of Environment Report at Director's Meeting, November 5th, 7pm Shawnigan Lake Community Centre

On October 23rd CVRD Directors and staff toured soil-dumping sites with Environment Minister Hon. Terry Lake. The objective of the tour, at the Minister's request, was to see first hand a number of active soil dumpsites and to discuss their significance for watershed concerns with Regional District leaders. Sites visited included the Evans site on Koksilah Road that threatens the Duncan area along with sites along Stebbings Road and the most currently active site on Goldstream Heights that present risks to Shawnigan. To illustrate the urgency of our concerns, our bus was passed by dozens of trucks bringing soil of unknown origin to the Metchosin Properties site on Goldstream Heights where the road was mud covered for a long distance from the active dumping area. Trucks delivering soil to this location are being monitored and license numbers recorded for further investigation. The Minister was shown the proximity of our headwaters dumpsites to Shawnigan Creek and Shawnigan Lake.

Minister Lake, with his experience in local government as well as his provincial role, commented on how much he understood the concern of CVRD residents that they were on the receiving end of another region's waste. As we discussed remedies for the current situation, the Minister expressed the limitation that the ministry faces in dealing with the movement of soils. Before regulatory sanctions can be legally applied for non-compliance with safety requirements there has to be direct evidence of environmental harm, not just the public concern for possible risks. We, of course, are concerned that damage to waterways and aquifers could be impossible to repair after the fact and that the risk should be avoided in the first place. Collecting the necessary evidence of contaminated soils that violate regulations will require government check-sampling of incoming soils and the accumulated material on the current dumpsites, not just reliance on self-reporting of the property owners or their hired professionals. The Ministry has notified dumpsite landowners that they are actively sampling their properties now as part of the Minister's commitments made to the CVRD in recent meetings in Victoria and we await results that we will report to the public as they arrive.

Now that the fall rains have come, Regional District by-law staff are monitoring turbidity in several locations on Shawnigan Creek and will report problems to the MOE authorities for source investigations if required. Residents who notice problems should call the CVRD By-Law 24hr Hotline at 250-746-2600 to let us know.

Join me and CVRD Chair Rob Hutchins at my next Director's Meeting on Monday November 5th at 7pm in the Shawnigan Lake Community Centre for an up-to-date discussion of the soil dumping issue and our continuing efforts to control the situation.