

## Metro sewerage commission featured in UN report

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

### Moncton shows value of collaborative effort

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Only 25 years ago, Metro Moncton did not have a waste water treatment plant and raw sewage was flowing from toilets, through a maze of underground pipes and into the Petitcodiac River.

Today, the success of the Greater Moncton Sewerage Commission (GMSC) is highlighted in a comprehensive report done for a United Nations agency that promotes the world's need for clean water and healthy sanitation systems.



Ron LeBlanc ,right , Chairman of the Greater Moncton Sewerage Commission unveiled a Global Atlas of Excreta, Wastewater Sludge and Biosolids Management, a project helped along by a partnership with the United Nations- HABITAT group headed by Dr. Graham Alabaster ,left, Chief of the Water Sanitation and Infrastructure Branch .

The 608-page report -- a Global Atlas of Excreta, Wastewater Sludge and Biosolids Management -- was released at a news conference yesterday in downtown Moncton, less than a kilometre away from the formerly sewage-filled Petitcodiac.

The comprehensive volume was called the Bible of solid waste in the world by Dr. Graham Alabaster of UN Habitat. Alabaster, of Britain, is the chief of water sanitation and infrastructure branch of the United Nations Human Settlements Program.

The creation of the atlas, which outlines many of the world's sanitation systems, the good, the bad and the non-existent, was an idea that came out of an international biosolids conference held in Moncton in June, 2007.

Writers from all over the world contributed to the atlas, which was edited by Ron LeBlanc, chairman of the GMSC, Roland Richard, also of the commission, and Peter Matthews of Britain.

LeBlanc said the Moncton example is featured in the report, but it doesn't mean it's a model to be copied by everyone.

"What works in Moncton may not work in India and what works in India may not work in China, but there are things to be learned," LeBlanc said.

"There are common issues everywhere. The atlas provides many, many examples from around the world. This is the first time we have had an inventory of these systems and a reference point for people around the world."

Alabaster said the Moncton example is relevant because it shows how various levels of government, different agencies and even the private sector can work together in order to get important work done.

"There are people in some areas where you can't even get people on the same (municipal) council to talk together," the UN official said. "In Moncton, we see what can be done when people make a collaborative effort."

The report, which will be distributed on the Internet and in hard copy to environment and public health departments around the world, includes six pages on the Moncton commission.

The United Nations has declared 2008 as the Year of Sanitation. Water is life and sanitation is dignity, LeBlanc added.

Alabaster admitted topics like wastewater sludge and biosolids management are often ignored by governments, but the lack of sanitation is the greatest health risk facing the world today.

"It's the number one killer," he said. "We need far more resources going to this issue and there has to be some political will to address it.

"According to the World Health Organization, for every \$1 we invest in sanitation, we get a return of \$30 in benefits."

Alabaster and LeBlanc each said the report will go a long way in convincing politicians and others more has to be done to improve sanitation systems in the world.

Dr. Louis Lapierre, an honorary professor at Université de Moncton and world-recognized environmentalist, said the knowledge uncovered in the report must be shared then acted upon.

"We must do a better job of explaining the uses of biowastes to the public," said Lapierre, chairman of the Institute of Environmental Monitoring and Research.

"Managing wastes for productive uses can be as easy as having a cup of coffee if we explain it properly."