

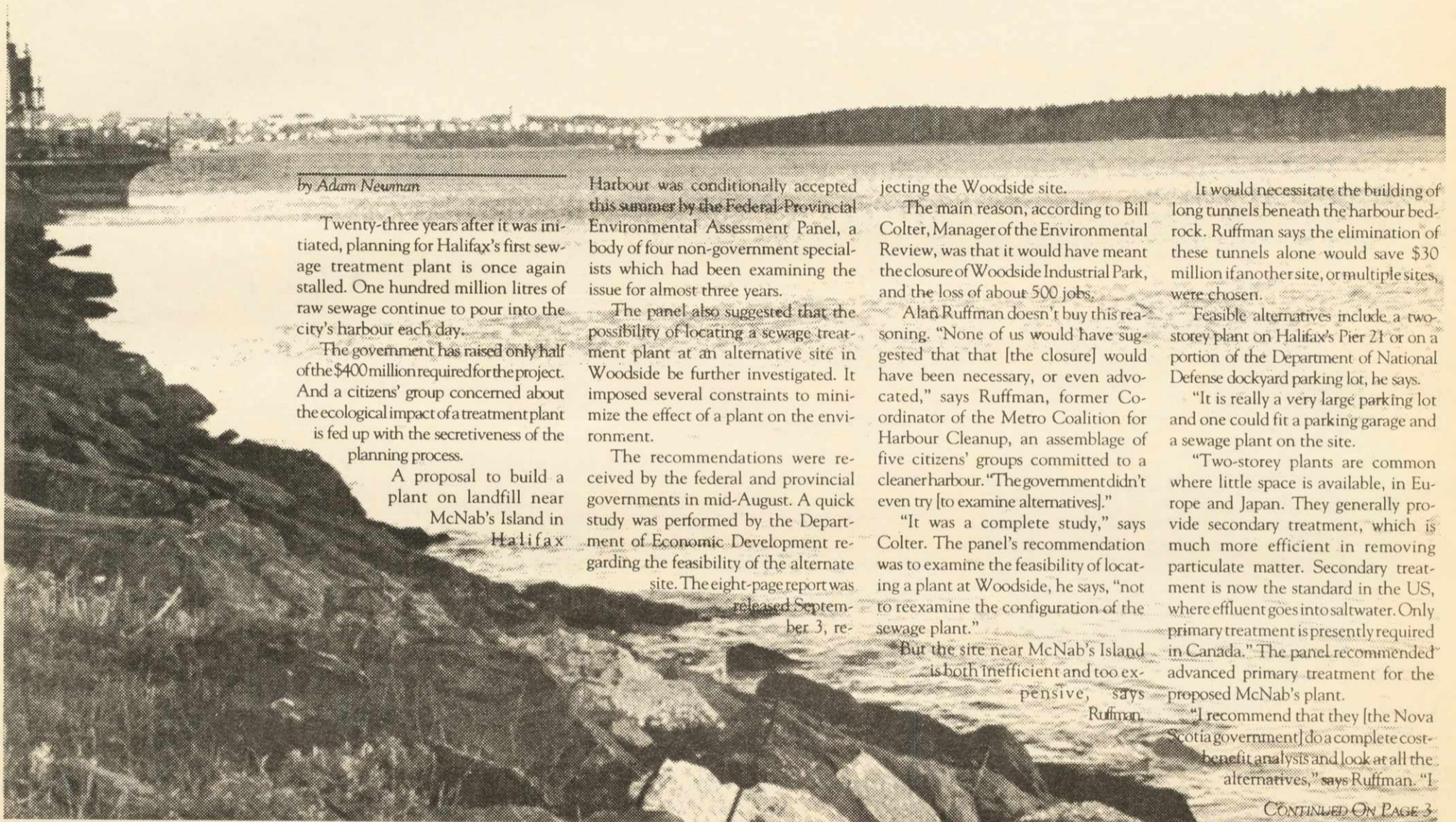
# the Gazette

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## Harbour cleanup plans up in the air



by Adam Newman

Twenty-three years after it was initiated, planning for Halifax's first sewage treatment plant is once again stalled. One hundred million litres of raw sewage continue to pour into the city's harbour each day.

The government has raised only half of the \$400 million required for the project. And a citizens' group concerned about the ecological impact of a treatment plant is fed up with the secretiveness of the planning process.

A proposal to build a plant on landfill near McNab's Island in Halifax

Harbour was conditionally accepted this summer by the Federal-Provincial Environmental Assessment Panel, a body of four non-government specialists which had been examining the issue for almost three years.

The panel also suggested that the possibility of locating a sewage treatment plant at an alternative site in Woodside be further investigated. It imposed several constraints to minimize the effect of a plant on the environment.

The recommendations were received by the federal and provincial governments in mid-August. A quick study was performed by the Department of Economic Development regarding the feasibility of the alternate site. The eight-page report was released September 3, re-

jecting the Woodside site.

The main reason, according to Bill Colter, Manager of the Environmental Review, was that it would have meant the closure of Woodside Industrial Park, and the loss of about 500 jobs.

Alan Ruffman doesn't buy this reasoning. "None of us would have suggested that [the closure] would have been necessary, or even advocated," says Ruffman, former Coordinator of the Metro Coalition for Harbour Cleanup, an assemblage of five citizens' groups committed to a cleaner harbour. "The government didn't even try [to examine alternatives]."

"It was a complete study," says Colter. The panel's recommendation was to examine the feasibility of locating a plant at Woodside, he says, "not to reexamine the configuration of the sewage plant."

But the site near McNab's Island is both inefficient and too expensive, says Ruffman.

It would necessitate the building of long tunnels beneath the harbour bedrock. Ruffman says the elimination of these tunnels alone would save \$30 million if another site, or multiple sites, were chosen.

Feasible alternatives include a two-storey plant on Halifax's Pier 21 or on a portion of the Department of National Defense dockyard parking lot, he says.

"It is really a very large parking lot and one could fit a parking garage and a sewage plant on the site.

"Two-storey plants are common where little space is available, in Europe and Japan. They generally provide secondary treatment, which is much more efficient in removing particulate matter. Secondary treatment is now the standard in the US, where effluent goes into saltwater. Only primary treatment is presently required in Canada." The panel recommended advanced primary treatment for the proposed McNab's plant.

"I recommend that they [the Nova Scotia government] do a complete cost-benefit analysis and look at all the alternatives," says Ruffman. "I

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PHOTO: LISA WAMBOLDT

## Students expect big things from Clancy win

by Gazette staff

Student leaders in Halifax have a list of beefs they intend to bring up with their newly returned Member of Parliament, Mary Clancy.

"I think it's important that she remember that this is a university constituency," says Sue Drapeau, Executive Officer of the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS). The riding of Halifax contains Dalhousie, St. Mary's University, the Technical University of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, making university students and employees a sizable proportion of the potential voting public.

Clancy, a Liberal first elected to the House of Commons in 1988, held on to her seat easily, outdistancing Tory Jim Vaughan and Reformer Steve Greene.

Tops on most student politicians' lists is the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP). Many student lobbyists have maintained that funding for the program has been allowed to fall below acceptable levels, threatening fair access to higher education.

"We do plan a review of the whole student loan program," pledged Clancy in an interview following her victory. "No one who has the ability and desire

to get a university education in this country needs to be turned away."

Clancy called the current criteria for qualifying for loans "far, far too restrictive." "We have to look at all the circumstances and make it flexible," she said, "particularly while we have the high unemployment rate." She also said the Liberals would be reviewing the levels of funding available to students.

Allison Young, Chair of SUNS, is skeptical. "Is the government going to be offering guarantees that accessibility is going to be maintained?" she asked. She also fears that current trends in the federal loan program could leave many students in long-term debt for rapidly rising tuition fees.

"I think the biggest thing that the Liberals have promised and that Mary Clancy has reiterated is to maintain the transfer payments" of federal funds for higher education, says Leo Gillis, External Director of the Saint Mary's University Students' Association. The Conservative government steadily reduced these payments to the provinces. "I think students have nothing to lose in turfing the Tories out," said Gillis.

Laura Penny, External Vice-President of the University of King's College Student Union, said Clancy should



Clancy looks somewhat pleased with her victory Monday night.

DALPHOTO: MIKE DEVONPORT

pressure the federal government to create summer jobs for students.

Lisa Lachance, Penny's counterpart in the Dalhousie Student Union, agrees. She adds that the Liberals should stick to a campaign promise to improve the financial assistance program for

aboriginal students.

Both Lachance and Penny are cautiously optimistic that Clancy will speak up for student issues in Ottawa.

"She has consistently asked questions about [summer employment] and CSLPs, in a Parliament where nobody

else was asking those questions," says Lachance.

Gillis agrees. "I think she's very informed. When you're in Opposition you have to be really vocal. I guess the real test will be whether she's vocal now that she's in Government."