

Can't escape so
why not change
to an ecologically
sustainable economy

Goodbye to the days when
isolation guaranteed pristine
wilderness. Environmental
degradation is now omnipresent
and relentless. Pollution dumps
with every snow on the arctic;
ozone thins over everyone.

Nowhere and no one escapes, not
even the wild west coast of
Vancouver Island where the
largest ocean used to sweep the
purest salt water onto the
cleanest beaches in the world.

Turn to page two and read *It
must never happen again*.
Trace the inadequate govern-
ment response in the *Chro-
nology* on page three. Then sign,
circulate and return the
Official Petition on page four.

We must save ourselves from the
current world war against the
environment being waged by
reckless and wasteful technology.
Proposed offshore oil drilling on
Canada's Pacific coast is part of
this war.

Your, our, everyone's personal
commitment to fight for an
ecologically sustainable way of
life is the only answer.

Wilderness Committee volunteer holding two dead birds. Photo: Ken Lay.

IT MUST NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN

by Ross Smith and Elspeth Miller,
Wilderness Committee members

"It's bad here, really bad. We can use all the help we can get." With that plea from the Friends of Clayoquot Sound in Tofino, we were on our way to help clean up the disastrous oil spill that hit Vancouver Island's west coast in early January.

When we arrived at the park warden's office at Long Beach, on Saturday, January 7, we were each handed a pair of heavy rubber gloves and a plastic painter's suit and directed to join other volunteers working on Wreck Beach at Florencia Bay.

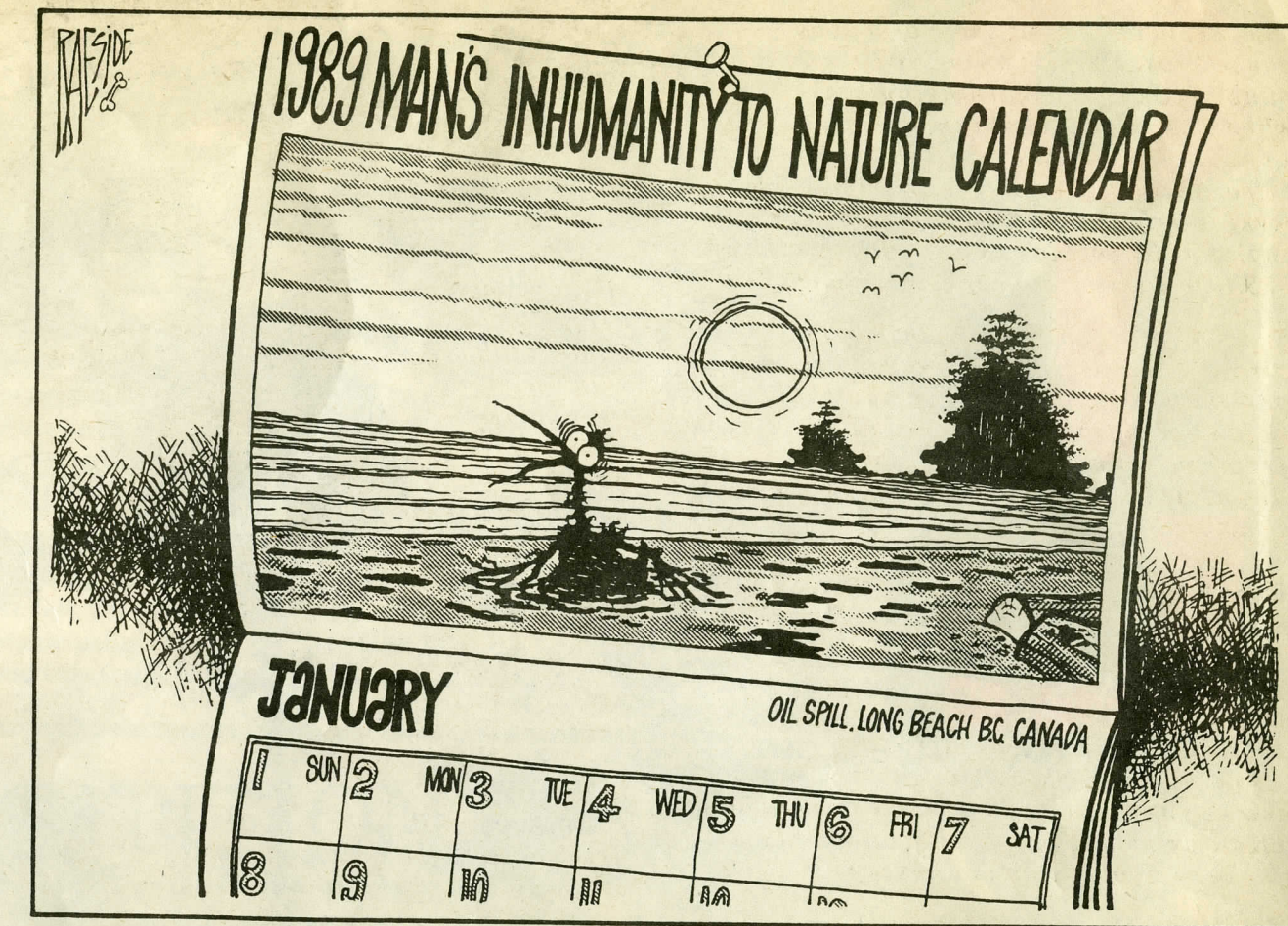
Soon we, too, were filthy with oil--both the dark sticky oil that coated the logging debris and the sand-encrusted oil that lay in great blobs, pancakes and tarry pools between the beached logs.

The job was straightforward--get the oil blobs in plastic bags and when the bags were heavy, move them up as high as possible on the beach, away from the next high tide. We slogged away, digging and scooping with our hands, filling bag after bag. Twenty of us, all in spooky white plastic suits, worked non-stop for three hours, yet seemed to gain little ground, cleaning up less than 50 metres of that 5 kilometre beach!

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

As night fell, we drove north to Tofino. At the fire hall we were met by the din of many voices, crackling radiophones and a persistently ringing phone. This was the volunteer co-ordination centre, organized and run by local Tofino residents.

Here, information from fishermen, remote residents and clean-up volunteers was being monitored to give a true picture of the crisis. Volunteers were told where they could sleep and where they should work.



far as we were concerned, their staff, supposedly the experts, were disorganized and ill-equipped for the job.

Federal and provincial government ministers on tour also tied up helicopter time, one day actually preventing a volunteer crew working on a remote wilderness beach from getting any lunch. Worse still, the helicopter used to escort government officials was supposed to be collecting bagged oil. Because the oil wasn't collected, high waves at high tide swept the bags back out to sea.

of congealed oil resembled pancakes, concentrated along the most recent tide lines.

Here, on this lonely stretch of sand, we met our most grim view of the spill's damage. Tangled among the seaweed and other oily debris were the tar-coated corpses of deep-diving seabirds. They were barely recognizable as life forms. It was hard to keep back our tears as we put their oiled bodies into the garbage bags.

MEETING STRACHAN ON SITE

On our third day, frustrated by an aborted attempt to get to a remote beach where clean-up hadn't yet

The Canadian coast guard and Parks Canada were also involved in the clean-up. The national parks department co-ordinated a very limited clean-up within the boundaries of the national park at Long Beach. Their bureaucracy, however, tended to hinder clean-up. Because Parks Canada, for example, would not bend their rules and allow trucks or backhoes onto park beaches, the privately contracted helicopters which were desperately needed for the clean-up of more inaccessible areas, were used to transport garbage bags full of oil from beaches where ordinary vehicles would have sufficed.

Spray-Away and Burrard Clean, the clean-up firms hired by the company that caused the accident, became known as "the contractors". During our time there, we saw them concentrate their efforts on the high-profile, easily-accessible national park beaches and monopolize the helicopter time. As

All in all, there were only a couple of helicopters working when we could have used dozens. None of the official agencies seemed to be working together.

SECOND DAY ON THE CLEAN-UP

On our second day, we were sent out by the volunteer centre to a more remote area. We loaded into a small herring skiff and headed out over open ocean breakers and around perilous rocks to Open Bay on Vargas Island. Here we encountered smaller globs of much muckier oil. Filled with the fibre of seaweed and sea worm casings, the pieces

begun, we ended up on Wickaninnish Beach, which volunteers were cleaning for the fifth time in as many days. Each successive tide brought in more oil. Each clean-up prevented oil from being washed back to sea where it would sink and break down doing its terrible damage to bottom life.

Suddenly an unfamiliar Jet Ranger helicopter landed just up the beach from where we were working. A party of officials made their way down the beach. One offered his hand, saying "Hello, I'm Bruce Strachan and this is my deputy minister.

(continued page 4)

Offshore drilling too risky

The recent west coast oil spill points out the lack of capacity to deal with oil on the high seas. Canadian coast guard clean-up equipment sat unused during the recent spill because, although it is the latest technology, it is useless except under

"ideal" protected water conditions!

Both Chevron and Petro Canada hold Canadian oil leases--up to now undeveloped--in the waters off our west coast. Any day now Ottawa proposes to lift the moratorium on exploration and drilling. Then, because their leases will lapse if not explored, Ottawa will, in effect, be forcing the oil companies to develop their holdings. Consider that in California Chevron has been charged more than 1,000 times for offshore spills and pollution.

The proposed South Moresby Marine Park Reserve contains some of these leases. No one in the federal government has revealed any plans to cancel them to create the marine park or explained how South Moresby will be protected from oil spill damage if drilling is allowed.

After the recent oil spill we can better imagine the environmental devastation that an offshore drilling accident would cause. British Columbia has one of the stormiest coasts in the world. In addition, the Charlottes straddle two major earthquake faults. No one can give believable assurances that there will be no oil spills there if development goes ahead.

It is the position of the Wilderness Committee that, since there is no safe way to drill for oil off the B.C. coast today, the offshore exploration and drilling moratorium must continue.



Ralley to support oil spill clean-up efforts Canada Place, Saturday, Jan. 14.
Photo: Peter Luthart.

Spill chronology

Dec. 23, 1988 - An oil barge owned by Sause Bros. Ocean Towing of Oregon is punctured off the Washington coast when a tow cable breaks in high seas. Lew Kittle of the Washington State Department of Ecology recommends that the leaking barge be towed away from nearby ecologically sensitive Gray's Harbor. In all, 875,000 litres of bunker C oil escapes.

Dec. 24 - More than 6,000 dead and dying sea birds begin washing up on the Washington and Oregon coasts. A well-organized volunteer clean-up begins with help coming from two federal and three state departments. Some 2,500 people work at cleaning birds.

Dec. 29 - The U.S. Coast Guard tracks a small oil slick off the coast, missing a larger slick headed for Vancouver Island.

Jan. 1, 1989 - Oil is spotted off Carmanah Point Lighthouse. U.S. officials tell the Canadian coast guard that a small slick being tracked by aircraft is no threat. No Canadian clean-up plan is prepared because it is felt the oil will be blown out to sea.

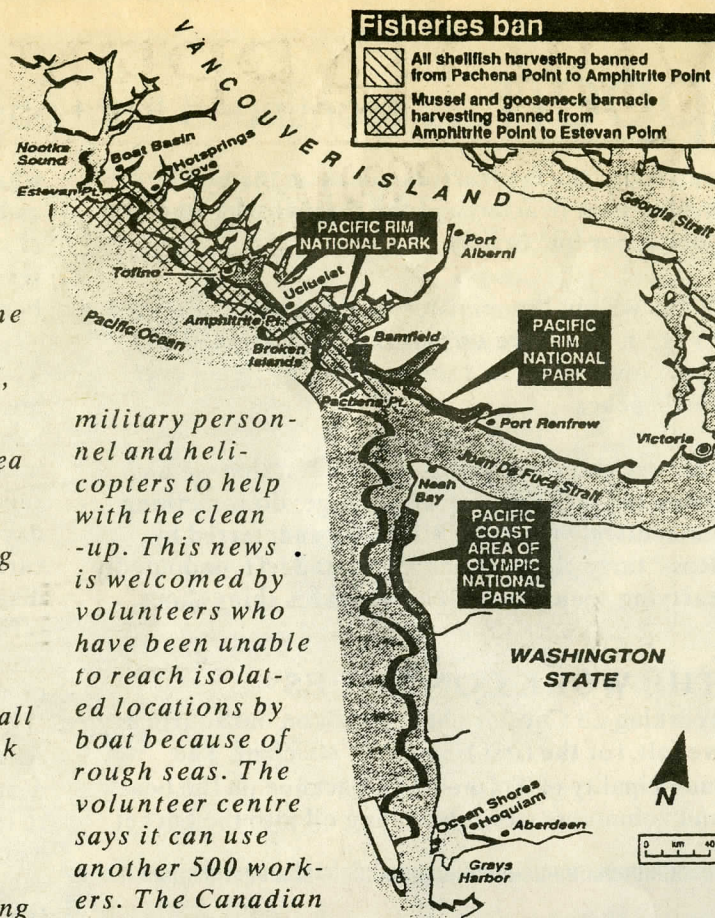
Jan. 3 - Morning light reveals heavy black oil on 8 km of beaches at Pacific Rim National Park. Canadian and U.S. officials are reluctant to admit this may be oil from the Gray's Bay spill. The barge company offers to pay any clean-up costs if the source can be confirmed.

Jan. 4 - Samples taken for testing confirm the U.S. source. Local clean-up efforts are organized out of Tofino.

Jan. 5 - Scientists, fishermen and

military personnel and helicopters to help with the clean-up. This news is welcomed by volunteers who have been unable to reach isolated locations by boat because of rough seas. The volunteer centre says it can use another 500 workers. The Canadian coast guard fails to follow up on Ottawa's offer of help from Comox Squadron 442 and clean-up efforts continue to be almost non-existent in remote locations.

Jan. 12 - Siddon and Bouchard announce a final assault on what they say is the last of the oil-covered beaches from Sooke to Esperanza Inlet. The gooey slick reaches the beaches of Victoria along with two dead oil-covered harbor seals. The helicopter-equipped coast guard ship George R. Pearkes is sent to help. An additional 80 paid workers are hired by the clean-up contractor. The Wilderness Committee mails vials of spill oil to every MP describing in a letter the frustrations of trying to deal with



oil slick threatening the Queen Charlotte Islands. In Vancouver the Wilderness Committee begins selling vials of oil as "souvenirs" to help raise money for the clean-up.

Jan. 20 - The Scott Islands, between Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlottes, is hit by the oil spill. The federal and B.C. governments continue to discuss who has jurisdiction over offshore oil exploration.

Jan. 21 - Outraged volunteers are offered certificates of appreciation by Premier Vander Zalm. Local MLA, Gerard Janssen, refuses to cooperate with the premier, saying that the volunteers would roll him in tar if he showed up with the certificates. An international committee is established to ensure future oil spills are tackled immediately.

Jan. 22 - The fishermen's union says that this spring's \$22 million herring fishery may be in danger. Clean-up efforts continue with up to 11 helicopters and scores of both paid and unpaid workers.

Jan. 26 - The coast guard begins a clean up of an oiled beach at Bajo Point near a colony of 300 endangered sea otters after one animal is killed by the contamination. Workers begin stripping the beach of gravel and replacing it with clean material.

Feb. 7 - Small oil blobs continue to wash up on Long Beach. Volunteer scuba divers check Ahous Bay, Triangle Island and Long Beach for oil and find almost none visible but state that it has probably worked its way deeper into sediments. Environment Canada dredges bottom samples for later analysis. Bajo Point is still a problem. The coast guard announces that 90 km of beach is now oil free.

Feb. 11 - Hot meals are cut off by the B.C.

sea otter colonies at Bajo Reef and the Bunsby Islands. Hundreds of dead sea birds are collected on beaches.

Jan. 6 - Crab and shellfish harvesting is banned over most of the coast costing the industry tens of thousands of dollars. Even deep-water crab pots are coming up with dead oil-coated crabs. The Wilderness Committee begins a full scale campaign to get more government clean-up help. We contact Environment Canada's emergency measures office in Ottawa at 2:30 a.m. Ontario time. Earlier in the day a federal official in Vancouver stated that the reason oil wasn't being picked up off the beaches was that "too much sand might be removed in the process."

Jan. 7 - Pressure mounts on B.C. Environment Minister Bruce Strachan, who continues to say that the oil-slicked beaches are Ottawa's concern, not his. Two WCWC directors head to Tofino to help with the clean-up and to assess the situation.

Jan. 8 - The Coast Guard vessel Sir James Douglas steams towards Nootka Sound with crews instructed to help clean up Friendly Cove the following morning.

Jan. 9 - Federal Environment Minister Bouchard, B.C. Environment Minister Strachan and Fisheries Minister Siddon tour the affected area. More than 100 volunteers and 80 paid employees work from dawn to dusk cleaning up the thick brown sludge. Strachan promises that the B.C. government will provide hot meals and replacement clothing for volunteers working the beaches.

Jan. 11 - Officials now concede that this spill is the worst in B.C. history. Continued pleading gets a commitment from Ottawa for

French beaches near Sooke, killing numerous sea birds.

Jan. 14 - Jim Walker, director of the B.C. Fish and Wildlife Branch, warns that oil spills could easily wipe out the province's 400 reintroduced sea otters.

Jan. 15 - About 50 scientists are now working on the west coast of the island assessing long term damage to the fragile environment. Over 100,000 kilos of oil-soaked debris is held in storage near Tofino.

Jan. 16 - A lawyer with the Washington State Department of Ecology says that Sause Bros. could use the U.S. admiralty law to avoid paying for the multi-million-dollar clean-up to coasts in B.C., Washington and Oregon.

Jan. 18 - Aircraft track the movement of an

seabird nesting sites on Clelland Island and on other areas disagree. Friends of Clayoquot Sound report from Tofino that oil blobs continue to wash ashore with each storm and continued help will be needed to clean beaches.

CREDIT AND THANKS

Published by Western Canada Wilderness Committee, 1520 W. 6th Ave, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1R2.

Editors - Adriane Carr, Paul George, Arne Hansen.
Writers - Arne Hansen, Elspeth Miller, Ross Smith.
Designers - Arne Hansen, Ken Lay.
Production - Arne Hansen. Graphics - Pat Walker.
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Please don't throw this newspaper away. Recycle it. Give it to a friend - only 50,000 were printed. A special thanks to all the volunteers who helped in the clean-up and kept this disaster from being a lot worse.



Bruce Strachan, left, and pilot meeting volunteers Lorna Walsh and Ross Smith on Long Beach. Photo: Mark Hobson.

It must never happen... (continued from page 2)

We've walked along the beach and, looking around here, I really can't see any oil."

We happened to be standing on a particularly good example of the problem--oil globs covered by tide-washed sand. Crouching down, we uncovered about a dozen large flat oil globs within a two metre radius of our meeting place, and heaped them together to form an oozing, fuming heap. Strachan registered some surprise.

He wanted to feel some oil so we handed him a glob and it stuck, despite his repeated attempts to grind it off with sand and assorted beach debris.

This was his first close look at the disaster area-- Monday, the 9th of January, a week after the oil started washing ashore.

We told Strachan of the shortage of helicopters for cleaning remote beaches, the lack of garbage bags

and tools, the contractors' focus on the highly visible park beaches and the reasons why we were "doing our bit" to help.

When we put the minister on the spot he admitted, "Yes," it was more serious than he imagined and "yes" you really can't see anything by flying over the beaches.

Our exchange was polite and we felt that we had given the officials a clear message: do something immediately to assist. Strachan, undeterred by Ross' tarry glove, shook hands and left, undoubtedly carrying some thick oil home on his shiny shoes.

THE WORK CONTINUES

Working on Chesterman's Beach on our fourth day we felt, for the first time, truly efficient. The municipality of Tofino had a backhoe on the beach and volunteers were shovelling oil into the bucket

which was then dumped directly into a dump truck and taken away for temporary storage. The globs of oil were smaller. By rigging a scraper out of several boards, we were able to clean up a lot of beach very quickly.

The sun came out and the news media scrambled about, interviewing volunteer workers for another story. All week the media had carried our pleas for more help to the outside world. We met the reporters everywhere, on the beaches during the day and over beers in the pub at night. They carried the real story of the disaster--in contrast to the official cover-up, that everything was taken care of and under control.

Although our help was still desperately needed we had to leave to take care of our work-a-day lives. We left asking ourselves questions. What if it had been a much larger spill or an oil well blowout? Who's going to clean-up a remote area like the central coast, where there is even poorer access and a smaller local population?

What about the total wilderness picture -- are we going to have any unspoiled nature left in the future?



OFFICIAL PETITION

ASKING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE IN PERPETUITY THE MORATORIUM ON OFFSHORE OIL EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CANADIAN PACIFIC

To the House of Commons in Parliament assembled - the petition of the undersigned citizens of Canada, who now avail themselves of their ancient and undoubted right, thus to present a grievance common to your petitioners in the certain assurance that your Honourable House will provide a remedy, DO HUMBLY SHEWETH;

WHEREAS there are high unavoidable risks of a catastrophic oil spill associated with offshore oil drilling and extraction on the seismically-active, storm-swept, high-energy coast off Vancouver Island, in the Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound, and;

WHEREAS the "small" oil spill washing up on the west coast of Vancouver Island in January of

Toxic effects long lasting

While volunteers were removing dead birds and oily debris from Vancouver Island beaches, weathered oil containing high levels of toxic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) was found in the

the sea birds and sea life but also to the way of life of thousands of natives and non-native residents living and depending on the renewable fishery and tourism resources along the coast, and;

WHEREAS the consumption of fossil fuels is causing global warming through the emission of carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere

THEREFORE, WE THE UNDERSIGNED, believing that the risks outweigh the benefits, ask that the current moratorium continue on all hydrocarbon exploration and development activities in the coastal waters off British Columbia, and that the Canadian government indicate to industry that this moratorium will not be lifted in the future, and we further ask that the money currently being spent by the federal government subsidizing offshore oil drilling on the Pacific coast be used instead to promote of energy conservation and the development and use of alternative, sustainable and environmentally benign sources of energy.

And as in duty bound we, your petitioners will ever pray.

NAME (Please print) ADDRESS (postal code) SIGNATURE

Please help so that it never happens again

Yes, I agree that we must make sure that another west coast oil spill never happens.

Enclosed is my \$ _____ tax-deductible donation to help you fight to keep in place the moratorium on west coast off-shore oil exploration and development and to develop a draft Coastal Protection Act to safeguard our shores and prevent future disasters. (All those who donate \$50 or more will receive--unless you specifically state that you don't want one--a small plastic vial of the oil that polluted the west coast.)

I want to join your active environmental society. Here is my \$20 annual membership fee.

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____
POSTAL CODE _____

Please send your donation and/or membership fee to Western Canada Wilderness Committee, #103-1520 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia - Thank you!

accumulating on the ocean floor. PAHs are extremely toxic and are considered hazardous waste by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PAHs, found naturally in crude oil, are concentrated either through refining or during weathering after a spill. The west coast oil spill consisted of bunker C oil which contains more PAHs than crude oil because it is more refined.

Oceanographer Silvaine Zimmermann of Vancouver says that the most dangerous form of PAH, benzo (a) pyrene (BaP), has been shown to biochemically attach to a cell's DNA. This could result in faulty replication of genes. "Tumors and cancer are common in beluga whales of the St. Lawrence. One of the main reasons they are dying out is due to BaP contamination", she explained.

PAHs are also felt to be one cause of the high incidence of tumors and lesions in fish in Vancouver's Burrard Inlet. A recently released Environment Canada study showed that 58 percent of the English sole sampled in the vicinity of the Port Moody oil refineries have liver lesions, tumors and cancer. These refineries release large volumes of PAHs into Burrard Inlet.

Grey whales are due back on the west coast in the spring. Their bottom feeding habits could easily spell doom for them. They scoop up mouthfuls of sand, which is then filtered out through the baleen. If the oily tar contaminating the sediments remains as soft as it is now, it will stick to and gum up the baleen. Even if the oil hardens, any ingestion will poison the whales with PAHs.

Please support the Friends of Clayoquot Sound who are continuing to fight the oil spill and working towards achieving locally sustainable development. Address: FOCS, Box 489, Tofino, British Columbia, V0R 2Z0

Let political leaders know how you feel about oil pollution and its threat to the environment. Write: Minister of the Environment, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0H3 and Minister of the Environment, Legislative Bldgs, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4