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“Where has all the coal tar gone?” The ELC asks the Ministry of Environment to investigate the whereabouts of up to 13 million litres of coal tar and 40,000 tons of toxic coke produced from Nanaimo’s former coal gasification plant.

Victoria, BC – July 27, 2006

In its 32 years of operation in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Nanaimo Gas Works produced an estimated 2 to 13 million litres of coal tar and 40,000 tons of toxic coke. No one knows what happened to this massive amount of contaminated waste.

The Environmental Law Centre (ELC) requested today that the Ministry of the Environment for British Columbia issue a pollution prevention order to determine the location of the millions of litres of coal tar and thousands of tons of missing coke. In the six-page letter, written on behalf of Nanaimo resident William L. Woldnik, the ELC asks the Ministry to investigate areas of potential environmental concern, including the Millstone River, lands immediately east and west of the southern end of Pearson bridge and the area around the intersection of Terminal Avenue and Comox Street.

Canadian governments have spent millions of dollars to clean up former coal gasification plants, which pose significant environmental and health hazards. In British Columbia, \$84 million was allocated to clean up the False Creek Expo lands, and clean-up efforts at Victoria’s Rock Bay site, which is currently being remediated, are expected to cost over \$30 million. Today’s letter to the Ministry states, “The similarities of operations, materials used and methods employed at the former coal gasification plants at False Creek, Rock Bay and Nanaimo are striking and there is nothing to indicate that Nanaimo has not suffered similar contamination.”

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A PDF version of the ELC’s letter to the Ministry is available at www.elc.uvic.ca.

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The Environmental Law Centre (ELC) is a non-profit society at the University of Victoria that provides research and advocacy on public interest environmental issues.