
School sites must be clean

BY BILL WOLFE

We are pleased that the Schools Construction Corporation is "trying to make amends" (see Times article, June 5). Reform will take more than public relations and \$25-million concessions such as the Martin Luther King school clean-up. SCC policies and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations must change.

Inspector General Mary Jane Cooper's 2005 report to Gov. Codey found that the SCC spent up to \$328 million to acquire contaminated lands "patently unsuitable"

for schools, not including cleanup costs.

Common sense dictates that schools should not be built on contaminated land unless it is first publicly demonstrated that there are no alternative clean sites. The SCC must stop diverting educational dollars to clean up sites that should never have been selected. SCC needs to cut its losses.

DEP rules allow toxic soil to be left on site and covered by a "cap." DEP rules must change. All contaminated soil must be excavated. Caps fail and present long-term

health risks to kids and communities.

Local authorities often selected contaminated lands to force the state to pick up the clean-up tab and reserve clean lands for development. To prevent this abuse, local planning must be backed by the DEP children's health-based standards.

We challenge the SCC and the DEP to embrace these real reforms.

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