

Speech to Council

By Harold Harris

August 17th, 2011

Good morning, Deputy Mayor and fellow Councilors. On behalf of the Papineau Lake Cottagers' Association, I would like to thank you for your time to once again discuss the proposed septage facility at Papineau Lake.

What does Papineau Lake mean to you? To me, it's the tranquility found in the early mornings, the pristine water where I swim and the fond memories of dear friends and family as we celebrate the summer months.

It is hard to relish the fact that our lake and surrounding area could be drastically changed if a Septage Disposal Site was developed near Papineau Lake. Please take a moment and look at this picture of our lake. It truly is beautiful; however, one can already see that we have a large "scar" at the south end. This is our current dump and gravel site. Now look closely, do you see Davis Pond? How about the dense forest stretching from one side of the picture to the other? Take a second look, do you see the trails that our entire community utilizes throughout the year, whether it be on ATV's or snowmobiles. Now imagine 10 acres being clear-cut to house this septage facility. Davis Pond, Kitts Creek and Papineau Creek may no longer have an abundance of fish, there will be fewer trees and our wetlands possibly destroyed.

It is important for the council to know that the Papineau Lake Cottagers' Association **(PLCA)** supports a septic solution that respects the unique environmental, economic and social characteristics of the community. We believe that there are better alternatives to the proposed site on Papineau Lake – as this septage site will likely have a negative impact on the surrounding environment along with economic and social ramifications for the entire community. The PLCA strongly urges the council to form a stakeholder group to help in the process and planning of the septage solution. This

group would be willing to work with the council to develop economically feasible alternatives that are environmentally friendly in a short-period of time.

If I'm not mistaken, on July 20th 2011, the Mayor promised our association that, the consultants the council has hired would be instructed to look at alternative sites that we recommended. My understanding is that the consultants have not yet obtained the go ahead, but time continues to pass, and the decision making process continues to move ahead. Our association wants to ensure that a fair and equitable process be followed, and with Papineau Lake still being considered the preferred site, we are concerned that the appropriate due diligence is not being performed.

The PLCA believes that a reasonable approach to selecting a site would include completing the appropriate environmental studies, to ensure that any site will not detrimentally impact the surrounding area. This may require a full hydrological survey be completed to ensure that we protect our valuable lake, rivers and wetlands. We insist that before moving forward with any decision with the proposed septage site, that a full environmental assessment be done on our legacy dumpsite (as this was one of the determining criteria for the septage site in the consultant's report). This environmental assessment would determine whether various contaminants are currently seeping into our drinking water. As you may already know, this is important to many homeowners at the south end of the lake because they use wells for their drinking water. Our other concern is that dried septage waste can become airborne and may lead to possible environmental and health concerns for all local residents. I'm pretty confident that council will address these concerns before making any well-informed decisions.

Furthermore, we believe that large waste disposal trucks will change our close-knit community. These loud trucks will be traveling along the south road and entering the site several times a day. Not only will the noise of the trucks cause great concern to our residents and wildlife, but the increase of heavy traffic on our roads may cause the

roads to be unsafe for children, and will likely cause further deterioration of the asphalt, which is already in very poor condition.

Tourism is also a key cornerstone to the livelihood of the entire Hastings Highlands region. We have already proposed alternative site locations that would minimize the impact to tourist and recreational areas. As you know, a site, which adversely impacts the image of the area as a pristine natural area, will likely impact the economic health of the surrounding area.

Additionally, I'd like to point out that a any septage solution must also be affordable for local households. We would like to work with you to suggest alternatives that may lower any undue and future ongoing expenses. I think we'd all agree that choosing the correct septage site is important, since the wrong location may have an adverse impact to Hastings Highland's tax base. If we choose the wrong site, lower property assessments may reduce future revenues to the town, which could ultimately exceed any short-term savings.

Finally, we must not forget that the proposed site is in close proximity to a public beach and cemetery, which are valued resources in our community's social life. Here is a picture showing how close the present dump is to our lake and the local cemetery. Even though the preferred site can be moved slightly in any direction, it is evident that it will always be extremely close to these valued resources. As we outlined almost a month ago, we would like to suggest other site options which may be preferable and less disruptive to the community. Again, I have no doubt that the council is weighing the impact of the septage site on the public beach and cemetery in their decision making process.

As I think back to a year ago, elections were about to commence. We thought that putting major decisions involving our land, economy, and the well being of Hastings Highlands into your hands was the right thing to do. Unfortunately, a year later, I feel that this septage proposal is not following due process. Reasonable suggestions and

viable alternatives have been proposed, but the council has taken no action. I have come to understand that the council is interested in a fast process, but fast should not come at the expense of diligence. We ask you to take a moment and recognize that a decision on this facility will remain with us for a long-time. Making sure that we get the right answer requires that we consider all feasible solutions, not just the first one, even if it is proposed by consultants. We believe that the decision to locate the septage facility at Papineau Lake represents threats to the environmental, economica and social well being of not only the Papineau Lake community but also to the Hastings Highlands community as a whole.

I will leave you with one last image, our dump. You can see the large amount of land that has already been destroyed for many decades to come. The septage facility will double or triple this site and this will only be the beginning. Papineau Lake is ours to protect and we need your support to keep it as pristine as it is today for many years to come. We urge you to consider our suggestions and alternatives and decide for yourselves whether this is the “best” location. I’m sure that you’ll find many other locations that are more environmentally suitable, economically favourable and will have fewer implications on our local community.

Thank you.