

Ministry of the Environment

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Ministère de l'Environnement

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August 28, 2012

Peter Shoemaker
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Toronto, ON
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ENV1283MC-2012-2337

Dear Mr. Shoemaker:

Thank you for your correspondence to the Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of the Environment, about the proposed septage trench system at the Papineau Lake Road Waste Disposal Site in the Municipality of Hastings Highlands. The Minister has asked that I respond on his behalf and I am pleased to do so.

I am aware of the concerns of property owners on Papineau Lake regarding the proposed location for a septage trench disposal system. Concerns have been raised about potential impacts to human health, the water quality of Papineau Lake and other nearby water bodies, groundwater, wetlands, wildlife, recreational trails and tourism. In addition, concerns have been raised about the current waste disposal site, and about servicing a proposed residential development at Birds Creek.

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) is committed to protecting human health and the environment. Through our review of environmental assessment documentation, and through review and approval of applications for Environmental Compliance Approvals (ECAs), Ministry staff ensure that any proposals for sewage or septage management are designed, operated and monitored in accordance with MOE guidelines and criteria, and are protective of health and the environment.

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands, as the proponent of the project, is following the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) process. The Class EA process is a self-assessment process, during which the proponent and the consultant evaluate alternative solutions and designs, identify potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures, and consult with the public and review agencies. Impacts to the environment, residents, and recreational uses must be considered during this process.

Throughout the Class EA process, the proponent is the contact for questions and concerns about the project. It is important that residents discuss their concerns and suggestions with the proponent by attending public meetings or open houses, writing letters and e-mails, or telephoning.

At the end of the Class EA process a Notice of Completion is issued and interested parties will have 30 days to review the final report and to request the Minister of the Environment for a Part II Order. A Part II Order is a means of requesting a more detailed evaluation and review. If the Minister issues a Part II Order, the proponent would be required to proceed through the individual Environmental Assessment process rather than follow the streamlined Class EA process. Part II Order requests must be made during the review period specified in the Notice of Completion. Requests for Part II Orders made prior to publication of the Notice of Completion are considered premature.

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Should the Municipality be successful in completing the Class EA process for the septage trenches at an approved waste disposal site property, then an amendment of the waste disposal site ECA would be required. In this scenario, the Municipality of Hastings Highlands would submit an application with the required supporting documentation and hydrogeologic information to amend the ECA to the Ministry. If trenches are located elsewhere, an organic waste (septage) site approval can be issued by the local District office. In both cases, the Ministry would review the application to assess the suitability of the site and would review the application for groundwater and surface water concerns. A more technical review by the Ministry of any concerns regarding groundwater and surface water could also be initiated at this stage. Any approval issued by the Ministry for the treatment of septage will contain specific site operational and monitoring conditions which are protective of the natural environment.

I recommend that you continue to discuss your concerns with the Municipality and consultants. My staff will provide comments to the Municipality as they circulate project information to us during the Class EA process. At this time, our Ministry has not received detailed technical information which would allow us to review the impacts of the proposed septage project and determine whether the proposal meets our requirements for protection of human health and the environment. For example, we have not received a hydrogeological assessment which assesses the impacts of the proposed septage trenches on water quality. Without this type of information, it would be premature for the MOE to provide comments to the Municipality and concerned parties on health and environmental impacts, or make a decision on whether the project can be approved. My staff have made the Municipality and its consultants aware of our information and future approval requirements.

With regard to the Papineau Lake Road Waste Disposal Site, the Ministry issued an amended ECA in May 2011. This approval includes up-to-date requirements for the operation of the site and sets out extensive monitoring requirements to ensure any impacts associated with the site are fully understood and the local groundwater sources are protected.

With regard to servicing of Birds Creek or any other area in the Municipality, the method of sewage servicing is decided by the Municipality. Sewage and septage treatment facilities are subject to the Class EA process and require an ECA from this Ministry. The MOE's role includes reviewing and providing comments to the project proponent on information submitted during the Class EA process, and reviewing and issuing ECAs.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to the attention of the MOE. If you require any additional information, or wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact Peter Taylor, Technical Support Manager, at 613-540-6884 or toll-free at 1-800-267-0974.

Regards,



Hollie Kew, MBA, BBA, CMA
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