

**Ministry of the Environment**

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ENV1283MC-2010-293

February 1, 2010

Mr. Perry Sarvas  
President, Simon Lake Community Stewardship Group  
E-mail: sarvas@vianet.ca

Dear Mr. Sarvas:

Thank you for your e-mail message of January 26, 2010, with regard to your concerns about sewage discharges to surface waters in the Sudbury area. I have been asked to respond to your correspondence on behalf of the Honourable John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment.

It is a ministry priority to ensure municipal sewage treatment facilities are able to meet today's treatment standards and minimize the discharge of untreated wastewater to Ontario's waterways. Sewage overflow outlets are included as a standard engineering practice to prevent human health concerns associated with basement flooding, sewage treatment plant washout or other potential emergencies. Bypasses and overflows often occur as a result of wet weather events, such as heavy rain or rapid spring thaws, where the amount of flow entering a sewage treatment plant exceeds the design capacity of the sewage works. Sewage bypassing is sometimes essential in order to protect the structural integrity and the biological processes that are vital to proper sewage treatment. Bypasses can also occur during dry weather, due to unavoidable circumstances such as power outages, blockages, equipment failures or maintenance.

Municipalities and operating authorities must routinely report all sewage bypasses and overflows to the ministry. If there is a risk to public health and safety, the local Medical Officer of Health and downstream users, including drinking water plants, First Nations communities and other municipalities, are notified.

The ministry's front-line staff conduct routine inspections of all municipal sewage works in the province. In addition, the ministry monitors incidents at sewage facilities and ensures long-term plans are in place to minimize overflows and bypasses.

Mr. Perry Sarvas

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The ministry continues to promote projects with positive impacts through existing funding programs. Since 2003, the province has provided approximately \$2.8 billion in support for municipal water and wastewater infrastructure through funding and loan programs. In June 2009, the government of Ontario announced over \$70 million in funding for wastewater treatment upgrades in Ontario communities.

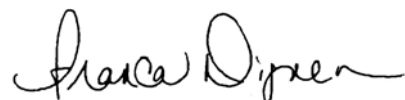
In the Sudbury area, it has been confirmed that 96% of sewage bypasses are due to wet weather events. Storm water can cause increased sewer flows and lead to bypasses due to a number of factors. These can include buildings' roof leaders (downspouts) being directly connected to sanitary sewers, storm and sanitary sewer cross-connections, and groundwater entering sewage collection systems. In 2008 and 2009 the City of Greater Sudbury spent more than \$50 million of capital improvement funds to address necessary sewer infrastructure upgrades. In addition, the City has drafted an updated Sewer Use By-law which will include new provisions to help reduce storm water entry into the sanitary sewer system, and protect the quality of the natural environment. The City's draft by-law will be presented to Council this February. There will also be opportunity for interested members of the public like you to find out more and to comment on the draft by-law before it is implemented.

I can assure you that the Ministry of the Environment appreciates the efforts of Ecojustice to highlight the challenges facing municipal sewage works; the ministry continues to consider Ecojustice's recommendations in our ongoing efforts to strengthen provincial environmental protection in this area.

Should you have any additional questions regarding this matter, please contact Ms. Celeste Dugas, Sudbury Area Supervisor, at 705-564-3278 or Toll Free at 1-800-890-8516.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to the minister's attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Franca Dignem". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Franca Dignem  
Director  
Northern Region