



SIMON LAKE COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP GROUP

Box 511

Naughton, ON P0M 2M0

www.simonlakestewardship.ca

info@simonlakestewardship.ca

SUMMARY REPORT PUBLIC FORUM ON SEWAGE DUMPING WITH CITY OF SUDBURY WATER/WASTEWATER SERVICES 19 NOVEMBER 2009 – 7:00 TO 9:00 PM

Purpose

The purpose of this Public Forum was to address the billions of liters of untreated and under-treated sewage being dumped into our local lakes and rivers. In June of 2009, an Ecojustice Report was released, “Flushing Out the Truth: Sewage Dumping in Ontario”, by Sierra Legal Defence Fund. This Report alerted our Stewardship to the alarming fact that Sudbury was the 4th highest offender in Ontario, for the volume of untreated and undertreated sewage being released into our natural environment during 2006 and 2007 – at 2.6 billion liters.

Consequently our Stewardship called this Public Forum to offer an opportunity:

- For the City of Sudbury Water/Wastewater Services to explain these disturbing numbers;
- To help raise an awareness with the Public, of these issues and challenges; and
- To come up with possible solutions, and a direction of focus for funding and effort.

City Water/Wastewater Presentation Summary

By Alastair Cook, Compliance Supervisor; and Nick Benkovich, Director,
The Greater City of Sudbury Water/Wastewater Services

Challenges relating to the release of untreated and under-treated sewage into the watershed:

- Bypass events caused by -- weather 96% -- Equipment Failure 1% -- and Other 3%;
- Heavy rain events overwhelm the sewage treatment facilities and necessitate release of sewage into the natural environment. This is done to protect the
 - stability of the treatment plants;
 - safety of staff; and
 - safety of the public and their homes;
- When bypasses occur the sewage is diluted by rainwater and is usually partially treated with chlorine;
- Disposing of grease down the drains ends up clogging pipes in the system – causing back-ups and necessitates bypassing sewage;
- Illegal downspout and sump pump hook-ups overwhelm the wastewater treatment plants, and often heavy rainfall can send larger amounts of water into the system than it is capable of handling; and

- 1973 Public and Private Sewer/Drain By-law is outdated and was initiated at a time when environmental impacts were given little consideration – it does currently prohibit downspout and sump pump hook-ups into the sanitary sewer system, but has not been enforced.

Other challenges contributing to downstream pollution:

- 70 years of sewage dumping into the natural environment;
- Sudbury dumped untreated sewage directly into Kelly Lake, until 1973 when sewage treatment began;
- 10 Sewage Treatment Plants are dumping treated, under-treated and untreated sewage into the Sudbury Basin Watershed;
- 4 Sewage Treatment Plants dumping treated, under-treated and untreated sewage into the watershed draining into Simon Lake; and
- Drugs, toxins and chemicals dumped down drains and toilets cannot be treated by current treatment methods and go out into the watershed and natural environment.

Measures City of Sudbury is pursuing to address these challenges and alleviate sewage bypasses:

- Smoke testing to find illegal hook-ups;
- Launched a public awareness program to educate the public about the problems caused by illegal hook-ups, and to encourage disconnecting downspouts and sump pumps from the sewer system;
- Considering expansion of some sewage treatment plants and closure of a few smaller plants;
- Looking to set waste water standards according to ISO 14001;
- Capital funding to upgrade and replace old sewer pipes and purchase equipment for continued growth and efficiency;
- Creating a Master Plan for strategic direction in best serving the community;
- Working on a waste recovery program to make sewage concentrate into a saleable fertilizer product (this will be done with the concentrate left over from the treated sewage); and
- Presenting an updated Sewer By-Law for Council approval that has stronger deterrents for non-compliance.

Comments and Suggestions

We are a Community, and will be most effective if we work together with a common purpose and goal. Some ideas are:

A Letter writing campaign encouraging citizens to use our draft letters to write the

- a) Ontario Ministry of the Environment to urge
 - stronger regulations and enforcement to protect our lakes and rivers;
 - strict standards applied to sewage by-passes;
 - reduction targets be mandated until sewage by-passes are a thing of the past; and
- b) Mayor and City Council to bring political pressure to
 - stop the practice of dumping untreated and under-treated sewage into our watersheds;
 - invest in sewage treatment infrastructure that is environmentally responsible;

- pass a By-law to effectively deal with illegal downspout and sump pump hookups, and control of fat, oil, grease and toxins;
 - impose strict fines for contravention of the new By-law;
 - consider building a catch basin to contain the bypassed sewage and water until it can be treated effectively;
 - place a moratorium on residential and industrial development until this sewage dumping issue has been dealt with satisfactorily;
 - fund a scientific study to investigate all sources of phosphate affecting Simon Lake;
 - inform the Public through the media when there is a bypass event to
 - allow public an opportunity to reduce water usage during those times,
 - allow for informed and healthy decisions about the use of downstream lakes and rivers, and
 - provide a better idea of the number and quantity of by-pass events; and
 - be totally transparent by allowing public access to bypass records, such as number, dates and duration of events, and volume of flow; and
- c) Media to keep them involved and informed.

Conclusion

This Public Forum was a “full house”, with lots of interest and input from the participants!! Several media representatives were present at this Forum, and it received extensive coverage from CTV and Channel 10 News, The Sudbury Star and Northern Life.

We were successful in not only raising a public awareness of the practice of sewage dumping and its effects on our lakes and rivers, but this Forum has provided us with solid ideas to pursue and the beginnings of a plan to help us move forward. Our Stewardship will now begin the work of developing a strategy and a framework in which to proceed.

We invite you to join us, and as a Community we will ensure the practice of sewage dumping is stopped.

To keep abreast of how our Stewardship is progressing and what we are up to, just go to the “Current Events” page on our website at www.simonlakestewardship.ca, or the “Stewardship Meetings” page, where all our Minutes are available for viewing and download.

To be placed on our mailing list, just send your request to info@simonlakestewardship.ca .

Simon Lake Community Stewardship Group

www.simonlakestewardship.ca

info@simonlakestewardship.ca

What is the legacy we want to leave our Children and Grandchildren?