REGION OF OTTAWA CARLETON | REPORT

RÉGION D'OTTAWA CARLETON | RAPPORT

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Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 27 October 1998

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator, Planning and Environment Committee

FROM/EXP. Environment and Transportation Commissioner

SUBJECT/OBJET **THE DISPOSAL OF WASTE FROM OLD SEPTIC FIELDS - RESPONSE TO OUTSTANDING INQUIRY NO. P&E - 2 (98)**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

At the Planning and Environment Committee meeting of 10 March 1998, the following inquiry, P & E No. 2-98, was put forward:

> *"Councillor Stewart raised a concern regarding the program of installing new septic fields in Ottawa-Carleton and the dumping of contaminated soils."*

DISCUSSION

Generally, septic fields are inspected under section Part A of the Building Code and as such fall under the local municipalities. In Ottawa-Carleton, most local municipalities, with the exception of Osgoode and West Carleton, have contracted their septic field inspections services to the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA).

When old septic fields are removed as part of a new installation, the contractor has the choice of two options when dealing with the contaminated waste material: (1) it can be disposed of at a licensed landfill site, a requirement of the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) as the waste is classified as *non-hazardous* solid waste; or (2) it can be used as fill material if the waste material can be stockpiled for one year at the site of the decommissioning, as the MOE have an ad hoc guideline that after that period it is no longer a *non-hazardous* solid waste, and it can then be used as a fill material (i.e., it need not go to a landfill).

Problems arise when some contractors dispose of the waste illegally to avoid disposal costs and, therefore, can undercut the construction costs of the contractors that dispose of the waste legitimately. This is a provincial enforcement issue that falls under Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act* and is the responsibility of the MOE. The MOE will respond to calls concerning illegal disposal but it has limited resources for gathering information and enforcement.

The RVCA estimated that 9,000 tonnes of waste is generated annually from the decommissioning of old septic fields. Following are estimates obtained from the landfill operators in Ottawa-Carleton: (1) Canadian Waste Services Inc. (CWS) estimates that little or no septic field waste is received at its waste facility in Carp; (2) the estimate for the amount of septic field waste received at the Region's waste facility at Trail Road is minimal; and (3) we have not received Huneault Waste Management's report.

We have also reviewed the issue with the Surface Water Quality Branch of the Water Environment Protection Division. Although there are potential adverse effects related to sediments and bacterial loading, there is no tracking mechanism to relate instances of these problems with the illegal disposal of septic waste.

Currently, the Regional Regulatory Code sets the price for disposal of contaminated soil for Trail Road at twice the normal tipping fee ($134/tonne). When this fee was established, the intent was that it would act as a disincentive to landfilling and, therefore, encourage remediation and reuse of contaminated soils particularly petroleum contaminated soils. It has been suggested that a reduced fee may encourage contractors to follow a legal disposal option; however, the requirement to pay any fee may cause some contractors to dump the material illegally. The effectiveness of a reduced landfill fee for disposal of waste from septic fields, therefore, is questionable as it would not likely promote remediation or reuse options. Other factors such as transportation distances to the landfill or general lack of concern for the environment may also lead to illegal dumping. In addition, as the general location of the decommissioning of septic fields is generally in rural areas, there is more opportunity for illegal dumping.

Preliminary discussions regarding storage on site were held with CWS. CWS indicated that it may be prepared to conduct a pilot program using the material as a daily cover material and charge a reduced rate (approximately $25/tonne). CWS does have concerns that the material may be of a poor consistency or have significant odour. It would not be willing to store the material for a year because of space limitations. Further discussion will be required to pursue this option, if desired.

At the Trail Road Waste Facility, limited space would affect our ability to provide a temporary septic waste storage area. Odour from the septic field material would also be a concern. Administration required to track the loads for one year, double-handling and increased environmental liability may continue to substantiate the increased tipping fee as is the case for other contaminated soil. While the Region may want to consider a pilot project at Trail Road for septic field waste, the facility does not require the amount of cover material that is needed for the CWS waste facility.

CONCLUSION

It would appear that the provision of a storage area or the reduction of the waste disposal rate for waste from septic fields is not justifiable from the landfill perspective. Based on recent scrutiny of landfill operations, it is not unexpected that landfill operators are concerned about operational changes that could upset their operations.

At this time, the best course of action regarding this issue is to provide ongoing education and promotion of the correct waste disposal procedures, as well as promoting the best practices to minimize adverse surface water quality objectives. This could be done by encouraging the local municipalities to require that the disposal of waste be identified during the permitting process, and suggesting that this can then be enforced through the inspection agency. In addition, there may be a private sector opportunity worth pursuing for someone who has a piece of land where, with the proper approvals, this type of material can be stockpiled for a period of time until it meets clean fill criteria.

Approved by
M. J. E. Sheflin, P.Eng.

KW/PM/md