



Presentation to MRC des Collines Council

RE: Septage Treatment Facility – criteria for site selection

From: Meredith Brown, Ottawa Riverkeeper

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Dear Mayors,

To move forward on the next phase of the regional septage treatment facility, I urge the MRC to consider the following:

Tax-paying residents of the MRC are concerned about the effective use of their tax dollars and the protection of their health and environment. Choosing the site for a regional treatment facility should consider the following criteria and questions:

1. **Protection of Health and Environment:** how will the effluent impact the water quality of the receiving water, are there any ecologically significant areas near the site that may be negatively impacted (i.e. Spawning areas, habitat for species at risk, etc.), are there many people living near the site that will be impacted by odours, is the area or receiving water body used for recreation such as swimming, kayaking, sailing, etc., is the receiving water used for drinking water
2. **Economics:** To choose between potential sites, it will be critical to compare transportation costs for each site. Transportation costs MUST include getting the septage to the facility AND getting the dewatered septage to the next treatment site.
3. **Future modifications / adaptations:** how does each site compare with respect to its ability to accommodate future upgrades or expansion?

In order to fully assess these criteria in a transparent manner and effectively compare potential sites, the best method is to use a decision matrix. Decision Matrices are widely used by engineers to compare options and make decisions. The MRC should insist that CIMA + provides a decision matrix that compares a minimum of 3 sites from the MRC against the criteria listed above. CIMA must clearly state any assumptions that are being made and what values they are using to determine estimated costs.

*Defending the Ottawa River. Protecting our Communities.
À la défense de la rivière des Outaouais. Pour la protection de nos communautés.*





Before numbers can be assigned to some of the criteria, the following must be taken into consideration:

Treatment of dewatered septage (commonly referred to as sludge or biosolids)

Once the septage has been dewatered, the treatment facility will treat the wastewater before it enters the river. CIMA and the MRC are not paying enough attention to the contaminated sludge that still remains. What happens to this sludge is an important decision that must be made before each site can be fully evaluated and compared to one another. The sludge will either have to be treated on-site or transported elsewhere. The true cost of treating our regional septage will depend on where the sludge is transported to. To save energy and reduce green house gas emissions the sludge should be treated as close as possible to the chosen site for the regional septage plant. To consider the question of impact on health and environment, there are different ways to treat and “use” the sludge, some being better choices than others. For example, sludge can be incinerated, composted, plasmified, land applied or placed in landfills. Where the sludge is treated and how the sludge is treated is an important part of the solution and should impact the economics and the ultimate choice of where to locate the regional septage facility. We need to decide on the fate of the sludge before we site the treatment facility.

Upgrades to meet new Federal Standards

The consultant should be asked more detail about their blanket statement that the treatment facility *could* be upgraded to meet the newly proposed Federal requirements for wastewater treatment. We would like to know:

How would the plant be upgraded, is there already a technology in place to make changes to the lagoon so that it will meet the new standards? We should be confident that this is possible before we approve the technology and site. If it is possible, what would the land requirements for the upgrade be? How much would the upgrade cost?

It is likely that it is more cost effective to build the “upgraded” facility right away. It will give much better effluent quality from day 1 (this is important to MRC residents) and the costs to upgrade in the future will likely be much higher than the additional cost to improve it today at time of construction.



Economies of Scale

Our neighbouring MRC of Pontiac is also in the same predicament as us – they need to find a solution for treating their septage. It would be wise to explore the possibility of constructing a treatment facility that would serve both MRCs. Together, it could make it feasible to treat our sludge on-site and create energy from it. This would reduce operating costs.

Next Steps

The first report from CIMA+ was challenging to read and there was no way to objectively and numerically compare different technologies that are available today to treat septage. For the next phase of this project we would like to see CIMA+ use a decision matrix with clearly referenced values and information sources. This is a very big investment for the MRC and the health of our communities is at stake. We must be diligent and thorough when it comes to choosing a site for this facility. The community (or at least the committee) should be consulted on the decision matrix and be given an opportunity to comment on the criteria used and the weighting given to each criteria, as well as the values assigned to each.