



**Highland Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant
Biosolids Management
Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Study
Public Information Centre #2**

Royal Canadian Legion
45 Lawson Rd., Scarborough
Thursday April 9, 2015, 6:00 pm

Project Team:

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Frank Quarisa – Director, Wastewater Treatment
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Anthony Pigaidoulis – Senior Engineer, Highland Creek Treatment Plant
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Josie Franch – Public Consultation Unit

Deborah Ross – CIMA+
Glenn Gerguson – Intrinsic Environmental Sciences
Anthony Ciccone – Golder Associates
Ame-Lia Tamburrini – Habitat Health Impact Consulting
Dave Hardy – Hardy Stevenson and Associates

Councillor Ron Moeser – Ward 44 Scarborough East
Leah Thurston – Constituency Assistant to Councillor Moeser
Councillor Paul Ainslie – Ward 43 Scarborough East

1.0 Introduction and Welcoming Remarks

Dave Hardy opened the meeting at 7:05p.m. He welcomed participants, introduced himself and the other project team members. He explained the goals of the evening and gave a brief overview of the meeting format which would consist of a presentation, question and answer period, followed by an opportunity to speak with staff directly through table discussions.

2.0 Presentation

Deborah Ross began the presentation. The slides from this evening's presentation are available online at toronto.ca/hctpbiosolidsea.

3.0 Questions and Answers

Following the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions of the project team. This is summarized below with the corresponding responses given by staff and the consultant.

Q: The community has been very clear that they would prefer the treatment plant to continue using the incineration process rather than switch to land application of biosolids. However, four out of the five alternatives presented today involve biosolids. Why isn't the City listening to the community?

A: A Biosolids Master Plan was completed a few years ago and recommended incineration; however council did not approve it. Council approval is required to move forward. As this study is being undertaken as an Environmental Assessment, all options need to be considered. Due process must be followed according to the guidelines set out by the Ministry of the Environment. The current study for HCTP is intended to be more in depth and more thorough than the original Biosolids Master Plan. It will now include a health assessment and input from other relevant City departments in order to make a recommendation.

Q: Why isn't the local councillor listening to the opinions of the community?

A: Two and a half years ago, the City went through a process to develop a Master Plan for Toronto as a whole. The plan underestimated the complexity of the solutions required for Highland Creek, which is why the City is now taking a step back to redo part of the process in order to bring forward the level of detail that is necessary for council to consider. In consultation with the MOE, it was determined that this requires a Schedule B Class EA, exploring the full range of potential solutions for Highland Creek and addressing all of the concerns and questions that the public, Council and all other stakeholders may have.

Q: There is an unpleasant smell at the Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant from May until September. Is this caused by the biosolids being hauled off site? Would Highland Creek face the same odour problems if the proposed changes were implemented?

A: The City is in the process of implementing an extensive odour control program for the Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant and odour complaints are already significantly reduced. Any odours from Ashbridges Bay are not associated with the haulage of biosolids. The facility is undergoing a massive renovation process that includes removal of old technologies that historically were more odourous. There has already been a significant decline in odour complaints over the last few years and the biggest decline in odours will be seen this coming year with the changes that have recently been made. None of the odours are tied to haulage or biosolids treatment.

Comment from member of the public: Since this is a political process, the residents in the community need to make their voices heard by also calling the mayor and their local councillors to express their opinions and concerns.

Q: How much of the pelletized product from Ashbridges Bay is actually spread onto fields and how much goes into a landfill?

A: 100% of the pelletized product from Ashbridges Bay is being sold to the agricultural community in southwestern Ontario. The City does not manage the pellet sales and marketing business, it is outsourced to a third party who also operates and maintains the facility. The success rate has been excellent and the demand for the product has increased over the last few years. There appears to be significant value in the product and the price will likely be rising soon. In terms of all biosolids produced at Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant in 2014, 99.4% was beneficial use (total of 140 thousand wet tons); which means that everything except for 1000 tons went to beneficial use.

Q: There were two or three fires down where the pelletizer was at Ashbridges Bay. Would potential fires be a concern if a pelletizer were put in at Highland Creek?

A: The only fire at the Ashbridges Bay pelletizer was in 2003, which generated a massive rebuild. After the rebuild, several issues arose during commissioning that delayed full start-up. Since then, the pelletizer has operated with a high level of reliability. Since 2008, there have been 3 one-month periods in which the facility was out of service. The reliability has been consistent over the last two years.

Q: The Board of Health released a review on the health and ecological risk of pellets in 2004. They concluded that they could not say if the use of pellets was all together safe. There were two areas of concerns: (1) the aerosols released during pellet production could be breathed in and may have pathogens attached to them and (2) copper exposure to children playing on a lawn where the pellets have been applied. Additionally, the pellets have never been evaluated or assessed for risks associated with their organic substances. The pellets are assessed for some pathogens such as E. coli, heavy metals and some dioxins; however there are a lot of chemicals in the sludge that will also end up in the pellets. The pellets should be labelled, especially if they are to be used for consumer use around houses and in gardens.

A: The 2004 health assessment of biosolids and pellet study concluded that at the time, the microbiological elements of the pellets were not a certain. It has since been proven that the biosolids process is effective in addressing the biological contaminants relating to the aerosols. This was the only human health risk identified. With respect to copper, the concern was regarding the potential impact on plants not humans, which has since been found to not be a problem.

Q: Is there a study or information source available to show how these findings have been proven since 2004?

A: The information for these findings was obtained by looking at the operational information from the pelletizer in terms of how it is working and how it is monitored. The temperatures required to remove pathogens have shown to be consistent with the operation of the pelletizer.

Q: Has anything been published outlining the findings since 2004?

A: No there has not.

Q: In Option #1 showing incineration with some form of off-site management of the ash, it is stated that the truck traffic would be around 80 trucks per year, which would be equivalent to 1 or 2 trucks per week. What would be the route for hauling the ash off-site?

A: Ash haulage is performed over a one to two week period each year – not continuously throughout the year. The route used in the future would be determined from this study.

Q: Would the City consider not always using the same route since there are other sources of truck traffic within the community? Could the City make a commitment to doing a more large-scale truck traffic study of the area to understand how to mitigate the truck traffic impact on the community as a whole?

A: The current haul route used for the ash goes along Beechgrove to Lawrence and heads north along Morningside. Ash haulage is a once per year operation, which is done over a one to two week period each year. There are about 50-80 trucks loads of ash hauled from the lagoons on site. The plant tries to pick a week that would not be too intrusive on the community and does the haulage around local traffic, in order to be as unobstructive to the local community as possible. This differs from the biosolids haulage, which would require around 4 trucks per day on a continuous basis. The haul route analysis being undertaken as part of this study is expected to be sufficiently comprehensive.

Q: What kind of contaminants would be released into the atmosphere with incineration and how does this compare to the air pollution potentially caused by the other options?

A: The EA is looking at approximately 40 different pollutants, some of which are not released from the incinerator. There is a long monitoring list of different pollutants for each proposed solution; there is a profile for the fluidized bed, a profile for the existing system and a profile for the pelletizer and truck traffic. It is a long and detailed list that looks at as many pollutants as possible.

Q: What is the argument against incineration? This option is the one preferred by the community and also seems to be the cheapest, so why are so many alternatives being looked at?

A: Ontario environmental legislation requires that an Environmental Assessment of some sort be done whenever this type of project is undertaken. The Class EA process is a planning process geared towards generating the optimal alternative. Within this process, there is stakeholder involvement and consultation as necessary. The pros and cons of all of the options will be available once the study is completed and the report is ready to be published. At this point, all of the alternatives being looked at are viable, safe and legal alternatives. The goal of the EA is to determine which option is the best fit for the plant and the community.

Q: What percentage of communities in Ontario use incineration?

A: Incineration is more common in large communities like Mississauga. Smaller plants in rural communities use beneficial use biosolids programs because they have close access to agricultural land; however some of those communities are finding it hard to find agricultural land so some of the biosolids are going further away. Landfill disposal of biosolids is used as a last resort.

A: An incinerator facility would be a prohibitive endeavour at a small wastewater treatment plant in rural Ontario. Conversely, large North American cities are more open to a variety of biosolid alternatives. Many factors are considered including the plant location, the surrounding community, available technology, costs, etc. Consideration of these factors is normally done during the EA (or planning process) in order to reach an optimal solution.

Q: The chart in the presentation describing how the short list of alternatives was selected shows one of the criteria as “no increase in truck traffic”. The plant is currently doing incineration, which would mean that Option 1 would involve upgrades to the plant and no increase in truck traffic because the plant processes would be essentially the same. The other alternatives would substantially increase truck traffic because the processes at the plant would change, and yet the chart indicates that they would not increase truck traffic. What is the explanation for this?

A: The wording on the chart in the presentation is not complete; this is more clearly explained in the technical memos. The criteria is that there be no increase in the quantity of materials that would in turn lead to additional hauling off site, compared to biosolids that are produced today. In other words, no bringing in trucks with filler material for blending and no expansion of the volume more than it is today. Blending the biosolids with filler material that in turn adds to the expected haulage requirements was therefore deemed not feasible.

Comment from member of the public: It is important to reflect on the history of this situation; several years ago, the City underwent a process to identify the problem, identify a solution and then implement the preferred solution. The preferred solution at that time was to upgrade the plant and continue with incineration. Toronto City Council high-jacked the process and the Ministry of the Environment recognized that the process was the problem; this is important to understand, since it is the reason we are here today. The community has always preferred the option to upgrade the technology, and the community does not want to see a major increase in local truck traffic. The comments made by the City regarding the increase in truck traffic seem to be disingenuous since there is currently little or no truck traffic, however with the proposed biosolids plan, there would be a significant increase in truck. The City should focus more on looking at the option of using fluidized beds; the technology is available and it is being used all over North America as well as in Europe.

Comment from member of the public: Slide #10 states that there is no demonstration of gasification in North America, however this is not true because Ottawa has one.

Q: During the discussion around biosolids, the word “safe” is being tossed around, however, according to the Ontario government, biosolids contain cadmium. And in spite of the regulations, factories dump around 400 million tons of chemical waste down the drain every year. A lot of this waste gets into the biosolids and the City isn’t testing for all of the thousands of possible contaminants. There is a short list of only 11 different metals that the biosolids are actually tested for.

A: The City of Toronto has an effective and vigorously enforced sewer-use bylaw. Industries are required to have a Pollution Prevention Plan in place and a team of bylaw inspectors take samples to monitor what industries are discharging into the system. The City goes to great lengths to protect the wastewater plants from contaminants that could be detrimental. Biosolids are the by-product of what is received through the sewer, and they are rich in key organic nutrients that the agricultural community values. Land application of biosolid cake as well as the use of pellets as fertilizers are both processes that have received wide spread approval across North America. The regulatory environment in many jurisdictions has tightened in recent years and Ontario has the Nutrient Management Act, which has strict rules and criteria around the land application of biosolids.

Comment from member of the public: The chart in the presentation and handout indicating that there would be no increase in truck traffic for Options 2 and 3 is misleading; it is very important that this be corrected. It is a misrepresentation of facts and the choice of a preferred solution could hinge on this detail. The reality is that there will definitely be an increase in truck traffic.

Comment from member of the public: The biosolids beneficial use program at Ashbridges Bay has resulted in a more stringent sewer-use bylaw in the City of Toronto, keeping industrial chemicals out of the sewer system. Before this program, the City was not interested in going to the front end of the process of sewage treatment to remove dangerous chemicals however, it is now essential to keep the sewage sludge clean if it is to be used as biosolids. Industries that were discharging cadmium into the sewer were charged and they no longer process within the boundaries of Toronto. The biosolids program has provided a way to ensure that the City's sewage treatment processes are running as clean as they possibly could. Toronto Public Health endorses the biosolids program because when the sewage sludge was being incinerated, the sewer-use bylaw was not very strict and industries were not doing Pollution Prevention Plans. Additionally, before the plant stopped incinerating, the air quality in Riverdale was a public health concern for the people living close to the incinerators.

Dave Hardy thanked everyone for attending and reminded participants to complete and submit their comment sheets by April 30, 2015.

Meeting adjourn.