

Hon John Gerretsen,
Minister of the Environment,
Constituency Office,
Suite 2
303 Bagot Street, The LaSalle Mews
Kingston, Ontario
K7K 5W7

August 10, 2009

Re: EBR # 010-6515: A Regulatory Framework for the Management of Non-Agricultural Source Materials and Regulatory Amendments Concerning Milking Centre Washwater and Anaerobic Digestion

Dear Hon. John Gerretsen,

I am currently a Palliative Care Physician Consultant at University Hospital, London Health Science Centre. Daily I watch people die of cancer and other illnesses that we know are preventable. We know that environmental toxins and chemical body burden contribute to these devastating diseases. I am acutely aware of how much more vigilant we need to be at lessening our exposure to toxins whenever possible if we are going to have any impact on reducing the incidence of cancer. The restriction of cosmetic pesticides is one important and commendable small step but there is so much more that we need to do.

Working in a tertiary care hospital I am also aware of the dangers of increasing antibiotic resistant organisms and the prevalence of "Super-bugs", both inside and outside of hospitals. We are becoming more aware that these problems are related to antibiotics that are inadvertently in our environment such as antibiotics and antibiotic soap in sewage increasing the development of antibiotic resistant organisms.

I am extremely concerned that the use of sewage and paper sludge, politely referred to as "Biosolids" is already contributing to these horrifying problems. There is potential for the impact to be even more devastating if this practice continues, or worse, expands.

For these reasons I find the proposed changes in Waste Regulation 347 and in the Nutrient Management Act to remove the Certificate of Approval permits for sewage sludges and paper sludges and other wastes on farm land to be a dangerous move in the wrong direction.

Sludges are wastes and they need to be managed as waste by the Ministry of the Environment due to their dangerous and toxic compounds, the industrial and pathogenic components, and the risk they pose to the food chain, wild life, livestock, farm soil, ground water, surface water and ultimately human health. Your Ministry, the Ministry of the Environment has the role and responsibility to develop waste policies to protect the public from harmful compounds. This is not the role of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of the Environment should have the technical staff to understand water quality protection, regulate the newly emerging contaminant compounds that are found in sludge, and to enforce waste regulations. For over 30 years land

application of sludges have been managed by the Ministry of Environment and governed by The Environmental Protection Act, and Certificates of Approval. I served as the acting Medical Officer of Health for Elgin St Thomas for ten years and I am very aware of limitation within the Ministry of the Environment. However the resources and the responsibility to manage industrial wastes, including sewage and paper sludge compounds, lie with the Ministry of the Environment and should remain there.

While sludges may have some plant nutrients, to shift their management over to the Nutrient Management Act which focuses solely on nutrient issues, is to unreservedly mischaracterize and misrepresent industrial and municipal sludges. Sludges can contain toxic quantities of PCBs, lead, arsenic, mercury, cadmium and other carcinogenic contaminants as well as harmful pathogens. These toxins must not be ignored.

The apparent rationale provided for the move to the NMA to manage sludges (NASM) is to decrease regulatory duplication. While regulating the possible nutrient aspect of sludge may be convenient, failing to regulate the harmful aspects has the potential to have devastating consequences for human health and possibly render farmland useless. The health and economic penalty for this governmental miscalculation could be astronomical.

The Canadian Infectious Disease Society has long called for a moratorium on sludge spreading until the risks to public health and the integrity of food are thoroughly evaluated. I would like to echo this stance. We cannot afford to be so careless with our farmland, environment and human health. Convenience and profit must not be this government's priorities.

The Province has enacted the Green Energy Act which promotes biomass for energy. Sludges, both paper and sewage sludge, can be used to create green renewable energy. This would have better emissions than the coal fired plants, and a better environmental footprint. There is no need or excuse to continue to pollute Ontario's food chain with industrial wastes and municipal sewage sludges.

At a time when we should be enhancing our environmental protection, farmland and food safety for the wellbeing of our citizens, I beg you and your government to reconsider the dangerous direction that you are heading. Keep Biosolids under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment requiring Certificates of Approval. While we are learning more about the health risks of sludges we must use the Precautionary Principle. It is time that we embark on a full investigation of the health, agricultural, water quality, food safety, and pathogen issues associated with sludge use on farmland. We cannot justify further delay. We must begin this immediately. The life you save may be that of your own or your loved one.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sharon Baker