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Letter to the Editor

From: Nancy Brent - Sauble Beach

Sauble Sewers - A Good Idea Gone Bad

A sewage system coming for the downtown core of Sauble Beach is a good idea, one that has been needed for many years. With the current Federal Government's Economic Action Plan, partnered with funding from the Provincial Government, it truly gives the community incentive to invest in this much needed infrastructure. However, the current design of this system, cost and its location will greatly compromise this project.

The original application to the Federal and Provincial governments in 2008 introduced the Clearford System, a sealed low flow system. In June 2009, the design was changed to a conventional gravity wastewater collection system without notification. In fact, the community was misled at the October 2009 public meeting. Today, most seasonal residents are not aware of what has happened. This new change now incurs serious implications to the Sauble River ecosystem. The conventional gravity sewer system will disperse an increased flow of treated effluent and pollutants into the Sauble River and affect its temperature. The water table in the downtown core area will be affected, too, as this is not a sealed pipe system. The Ministry of the Environment is continuing its review with a report due within a couple of weeks. In order to expand the system to accommodate future growth, a new Environmental Assessment must be completed.

Accompanying this new change of system design is cost. The new proposal will significantly boost the cost from approximately \$10 million to \$12.7 million and the entire increase will be passed on to its anticipated 303 users.

The location of this proposed sewage treatment plant is not well chosen. Recently, despite numerous requests from many concerned residents, including a Letter of Request/Petition of over 130 signatures to defer the passing of the zoning by-law until another public meeting could be held, the by-law was passed by Council on February 23, 2010. The land was purchased in August 2009 for approximately \$450,000 without being granted a Certificate of Approval by the MOE for a system. It abuts a campground, affects a residential neighbourhood, and a cottage rental business approximately one kilometer downstream. This cannot be complimentary to the livelihood of the businesses, residents, or to the Economic Development Plan for the area. Also, depending on wind direction, the foul odors will make for a very unpleasant day. Other sites and systems are available for consideration that does not involve the Sauble River.

The family campground next to the selected location has a beautiful, natural setting with kayaks and canoes and considered a core Sauble Beach business. It is a mystery as to why Council would jeopardize one of the area's tourist hosting businesses. People who stay there boost the local economy in many ways.

Currently, there are two appeals of the zoning by-law going to the OMB at great personal expense, while Council will defend their case at the taxpayers' expense. This rezoning by-law should not have been passed until all pertinent criteria and community objections were addressed.

Although it is an opportunistic time to bring a sewage treatment plant to Sauble Beach, I am perplexed as to why Council has chosen to ignore the voices of its constituents. We are reasonable people that have serious concerns with the Town's approach and plans. As usual, Council likes to rush things through when the majority of Sauble Beach taxpayers, both residential and commercial, are unaware and not present in the community. What's the rush?? Funding for this infrastructure is available until 2016. Let's get it right!

Let's bring the correct sewage system to an appropriate location for a better community and for the environment.