

September 19, 2013

Township of Central Frontenac
1084 Elizabeth St.
Sharbot Lake, ON, K0H 2P0

Attention: Council Members

Re: Establishing a Septic Re-inspection Program

From all perspectives — *environmental, cultural, social and economic* — the lakes and rivers of Central Frontenac represent an invaluable resource to the municipality, its residents and visitors for the present and as a long term investment for the future.

As detailed below, excessive nutrients (especially phosphorus) migrating from faulty septic systems represent a serious threat to these resources as was demonstrated scientifically in the Experimental Lakes Area and as has been evidenced in many other jurisdictions across the province, including the Muskokas, the Lake Simcoe area and the Kawarthas.

In recent years, the province introduced a valuable tool under the Building Code Act for municipalities to address this issue. This tool complements the available planning precautions routinely used under the Planning Act; i.e. in Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws.

The purpose of this letter is, therefore, to request that Council take advantage of this tool and commit by resolution **to investigate the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive septic system re-inspection program for the township and further that Council establish a committee to undertake this investigation.**

In making this request, we (the lake associations representing the largest and most populated water bodies within the township) have outlined below the background and rationale for developing such a program. In doing this, we hope that Council will agree that there is ample justification for moving forward on this matter by initiating work to develop and implement an appropriate program.

In addition, these lake associations wish to extend to Council our assistance in developing such a program for our area. This could include direct participation on a committee or sub-committee established by Council to tackle this issue and/or outreach and educational efforts in support of the program as it is being developed and eventually implemented.

In closing, we wish to participate constructively with the township “in doing the right thing” to address an environmental issue that incrementally could have devastating impacts on the water quality of our valued lakes. These impacts are gradual until they reach a tipping point and then the effect, is sudden and severe.

It won't happen quickly (not in a term of Council), and the effects are exceedingly difficult and expensive to reverse. The best preventative action is to ensure that all septic systems are functioning properly. Taking that action now will help ensure that the exceptional water quality of our lakes will continue to enrich the municipality for future generations.

Respectfully submitted by

Area Lake/Property Owner Associations

Theresa Smith, Big Clear Lake

Larry Arpaia, Bob's and Crow Lakes

Irv Dardick, Eagle Lake

John Cartledge, Elbow Lake

Terry Eccles, Long Lake

Terry Kennedy, Kennebec Lake

Ken Waller, Sharbot Lake

Attachment

Establishing a Septic Re-inspection Program
(Attachment to Council letter dated Sept. 19, 2013)

Background and Rationale

One of the key parameters used to assess lake water quality is phosphorus levels. The Ministry of the Environment mandates maximum phosphorus concentrations for protection of water quality and sets limits for the allowable phosphorus load from shoreline development. Unfortunately, phosphorus enrichment of lake water can lead to reduced oxygen levels, especially in deep, cold water. As a consequence, the Ministry of Natural Resources has developed a new standard for dissolved oxygen levels to protect lake trout habitat.

In the Township of Central Frontenac, four lakes have been designated as highly sensitive lake trout lakes — Crow, Eagle, Sharbot (west basin) and Silver Lakes. These lakes serve as prime examples of why the migration of sub-surface pollution is a real concern.

In response, the Official Plan for Central Frontenac now specifies for these lakes that all septic systems for new lots must be at least 300 metres from a shoreline. This requirement effectively reduces phosphorus loading by prohibiting additional lakeshore residences.

But nothing in the current Official Plan protects water quality by assessing the adequacy of existing septic systems, which really represent a potential source of serious pollution.

The *Clean Water Act, 2006* and modifications to the *Ontario Building Code (Ontario Regulation 315/10)* now provide the authority and framework for the Township of Central Frontenac to address this deficiency by enabling municipalities to establish an on-site sewage system maintenance inspection program.

From a slightly different perspective, total phosphorus and dissolved oxygen concentration are also instrumental in formulating lake capacity. The current MOE Lake Capacity Model predicts the property development capacity for a specific lake and compares this estimate with current levels of lakeshore development, both seasonal and permanent. This type of determination allows a municipality to judge how many new residences or cottages can be built on a specific lake. The phosphorus level in lake water — faulty or inadequate septic systems being the major human contributor — is a key element in applying the lake capacity model.

Assessing lake capacity helps protect or improve water quality so that permanent and seasonal residents with lakeshore properties can continue to enjoy good water quality. It also helps protect fish habitat and sustain an adequate fishery. Such an approach assists municipalities in determining their lakeshore development plans as they formulate and upgrade Official Plans.

The Township of Central Frontenac has incorporated principles for lakeshore management on the aforementioned highly sensitive lake trout lakes that have been declared “at capacity” by Ontario Ministries of the Environment, Natural Resources and Housing and Municipal Affairs based on phosphorus concentrations and dissolved oxygen levels in the August to September time frame.

Protecting our lakes from incremental contamination by implementing a comprehensive on-site septic system re-inspection program will help ensure lake water quality is maintained and development capacities are sustained.

Through education, property owners must be made aware of the implications of unsafe and faulty septic systems. Contamination of groundwater and adjacent water bodies requires both remediation and prevention.