

Press Release – August 9, 2006

St. Joseph's Ravine Testing Reveals Serious Water Quality Problems

On August 8, the President of the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association revealed to Bluewater Council that testing now shows serious ongoing problems resulting from the July 10 manure spill. John Gillespie, president of BSRA and resident of St. Joseph Shores, stated that six years of data collected through ravine and lake testing show that "events similar to this spill occur three to four times a year in all four ravines tested by BSRA." He went on to say that "this spill has provided absolute proof that agricultural practices are a contributing source of these events."

Gillespie told Council that BSRA has been informed by a local research lab that the testing of water as it moves down the stream and into the lake should be supplemented by testing of the sediments at the bottom of the water course. Such testing may reveal that serious pathogens could survive at very high levels for many months in the sediment. These pathogens may include a serious parasite called cryptosporidium, as well as the e.coli that has been noted in the water column and in the lake for years. Gillespie said "Cryptosporidium is a dangerous parasite which has had very serious health impacts in the USA and elsewhere."

"The attitude of the Ministry of the Environment" said Gillespie, "appears to be that these incidents are not very serious, that they do not pose significant health or environmental risks and that specific clean-up action is not required." He went on to say "The Ministry of the Environment has responsibilities under current environmental law that it is not fulfilling." These responsibilities include developing a formal spill response plan, containment of spills, treatment of spills, and remediation of long term impacts. Gillespie asked Council to help recognize and acknowledge the extent of the problem, to help commit to taking corrective action, and to use the laws that are already in place as they were intended – in order to address watershed and lake contamination. He also asked Council to encourage county, provincial and federal authorities to initiate testing of new clean-up technologies.

Councillor Bill MacDougall commented at the Bluewater Council meeting "I think the Ministry of the Environment has definitely dropped the ball on this.... The legislation is in place, but the Ministry of the Environment has done nothing!"

Mayor Bill Dowson said that there are mixed messages between what the Ministry of the Environment is telling him and what they are telling others.

Council decided to invite the Ministry of the Environment to attend an upcoming Council meeting to discuss the manure spill, to identify their response to the spill, and to explain what punitive actions will follow.

Gillespie's presentation and the test results from the past four years are available on the website of the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association at www.bsra.ca.