

January 20, 2023

Member Municipality of ROMA [Rural Ontario Municipal Association]

Dear Mayor and Councillors;

## The Truth About Biosolid Fertilizer

Many people in rural Ontario are discovering, the hard way, what the truth is about biosolid fertilizer. It is **not as advertised**. It is being marketed as a natural organic product that is safe to be used as fertilizer and therefore can be stored and spread on our farm land. We have found, from **real life experience**, that this is simply not the case. It is not a natural organic product and we agree with the **David Suzuki Foundation** [1] that it is certainly **not safe to be spread on our farm land**. Because this product was used in our area and caused adverse health effects, we did a lot of research to learn what it really is and what is known about it.

Biosolid fertilizer, also referred to as NASM [non-agricultural source material], is sewage from all sources – industrial, commercial, hospital and residential. It is known to **contain numerous pathogens** including heavy metals, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, viruses and bacteria. There is significant focus on cleaning the waste water at a sewage treatment facility. This process results in at least 90% of the pathogens remaining in the solid waste or sludge [2]. This sludge is then simply dehydrated and pelletized to create biosolid fertilizer.

The CFIA [Canadian Food Inspection Agency] includes biosolid fertilizer in the same category as organic waste and compost simply because it contains nitrogen and phosphorus. There is no acknowledgement given to the numerous pathogens it contains. Testing of biosolid fertilizer is limited to only 11 heavy metals [2] and 2 bacteria even though it also **contains many of the approximately 8,400 chemicals used in “significant amount”** [3]. Science now labels certain of these chemicals as ‘**forever chemicals**’ [4] as they do not breakdown over time in the soil – only accumulate.

Yes, it is true that, historically speaking, farmers used human waste as fertilizer. However, the waste from their own outhouse or septic tank 100 years ago did not contain the chemicals that are in use today – and it certainly did not contain **toxic waste from factories and hospitals**.

**There are numerous issues that we have experienced with the real-life use of biosolid fertilizer.** These issues include: persistent noxious odour [experienced for kilometres from site, ongoing for months after application, especially with various weather events – heavy dew, light rain, fog, high humidity]; severe adverse health effects [headaches, nausea, vomiting, respiratory issues] [5]; spontaneous combustion of stored piles [strain on resources of local fire department]; and possible well water contamination [unconfirmed].

There are several countries, including Switzerland and Germany, which have **banned** the use of biosolid fertilizer because of “the **risk of irreversible damage to the soil and the danger to public health**” [6]. However, it is still allowed to be used as fertilizer in Ontario – with **little to no regulation** on the use, storage and distribution.

At this time, we are simply educating people about biosolid fertilizer. People need to know what it really is. We have formed a group called ‘Citizens Concerned about Biosolids’ and will continue to research and educate others about this noxious product. If you would like **more information**, kindly **contact us** at: [ccab.ontario@gmail.com](mailto:ccab.ontario@gmail.com)

Thank you for reading this information. Please share it with others.

Sincerely,

*Heather Cormack*

Heather Cormack

On behalf of Citizens Concerned about Biosolids

Footnotes:

1. David Suzuki Foundation  
Open letter against Biosolids  
Obtained via Public Information and Volunteer Coordinator
2. "Biosolids a 'disaster waiting to happen' "  
The Toronto Star GTA  
July 13, 2008
3. "Risks Associated with Application of Municipal Biosolids to Agricultural Lands in a Canadian Context" - Page 5  
Literature Review  
March 2015  
Prepared by: Ryerson University  
Prepared for: Canadian Municipal Water Consortium & Canadian Water Network
4. "'Forever Chemicals' coming to your table, if not already there"  
Environment and Energy Report  
September 27, 2019  
By Pat Rizzuto
5. Other health risks are noted in:  
"Health Survey of Residents Living Near Farm Fields Permitted to Receive Biosolids"  
Environmental & Occupational Health  
Vol. 62 No. 1 2007
6. "Canada lags behind on rules for biosolids"  
Merritt Herald BC  
November 21, 2018

This article includes the following paragraph:

"Switzerland has completely banned the use of biosolids on agricultural soils because of 'the risk of irreversible damage to the soil, and the danger to public health.' The German environment agency deems the agricultural use of biosolids to be 'a serious public health and environmental hazard and advocates that this practice be phased out."