



Septic Tank Sludge Treatment Centre Project

The facts...

Publication N° 2: Questions 20 to 29

The Mayors Council prepared this second document to respond to the main questions from the population regarding the septic tank sludge treatment centre project. Over the next few weeks, the MRC will post more answers on its Web site when they have been completed.

Caution : The Mayors Council would like to stress the following:

- **The MRC is currently reviewing the main components of the project, including applicable technologies and potential sites. This review is a follow up to the public consultations held since last summer.**
- **The review was undertaken to meet the commitment to choose the best solution for the MRC and to take into consideration the questions, comments and concerns expressed by the population.**
- **Consequently, no final decision will be taken as to the technologies and the site of the future regional centre before this review exercise is completed.**
- **The answers found in this document indicate what we know as of March 15, 2011.**

Questions and answers

20. What organizations will be responsible for testing the quality of the water that will be returned to the receiving waterway? How often will those tests be carried out? Will the results of the tests be made public?

The ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) will impose a strict follow-up program on the MRC by means of the certificate of authority (CA) that they will issue for the project. Test frequency has not yet been determined since the MRC must first choose a site before sending any request for a CA to the MDDEP.

Depending on the objective of the program, continuous, daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal measures could be imposed by the MDDEP.

Samples on the MRC site will be taken by MRC staff, companies with environmental expertise and the MDDEP.

The same organizations will perform tests in the receiving waterway (e.g. the Gatineau River) upstream, in the mixing zone and downstream. Environmental groups or other organizations are free to take water samples from the river.

21. Will the possibility of cumulative effects that could lead to polluting the waterways be assessed as part of this project?

In order to authorize the project, the MDDEP will provide environmental discharge objectives (EDOs). The method of establishing EDOs involves the characteristics of the discharge, those of the receiving environment, as well as the quality level required to sustain water uses. The characteristics of the receiving environment are the natural quality and the present quality of the body of water, as well as its vulnerability and its capacity to dilute and assimilate. The quality level necessary to maintain water uses is represented by the criteria of water quality and the criteria of the overall toxicity of the effluents.

The EDOs are based on the quality of water upstream from the discharge point, the flow rate or volume of the water considered for dilution, the flow rate of the effluent and the criteria of water quality for each of the uses and for the overall toxicity of the effluent. Calculation of the EDOs is based on a record of charges applied on a portion of the body of water. The record is established in such a way that for each contaminant, the addition of the charge of the effluent, to the amount already present upstream from the discharge, does not exceed the maximum charge tolerable at the limit of a restricted mixing zone. This zone is attributed providing it does not adversely affect the entire body of water.

Briefly, the EDOs that will be authorized by the MDDEP for the project will be designed in such a way that there will be no cumulative effects that could pollute the receiving waterway.

22. What mechanisms are planned to ensure that the project has no impact on the air, the water, wildlife and human beings?

Applications for authorization certificates pursuant to Sections 22 and 32 of the *Environment Quality Act* and the application for testing under the provisions on the protection of fish habitats of the *Fisheries Act* detail the conditions of the environment, the characteristics of the project, projected impacts and attenuation measures proposed by the promoter. Both levels of government consider the project and make recommendations before authorizing the proposed project.

23. Where can we find the assessment of the sites considered by the MRC for the installation of a septic tank sludge treatment centre since 1991?

Stage 3 of the mandate given to CIMA+ included a criteria grid to target sectors of the MRC with the best technical characteristics and those the most in line with the three poles of sustainable development (environmental, economic, social). Those criteria were integrated into the mapping and applied across the territory of the MRC. This approach is the result of a request by MRC citizens who wanted the whole MRC territory evaluated for this project.

The purpose of the process was to identify those sectors with the best potential for the installation of a regional septic tank sludge treatment centre (RSTSTC). The exercise led to the elimination of a large part of the territory of the MRC that did not meet the basic conditions.

Given that the criteria grid was applied to the whole territory of the MRC, sites examined since 1991 were re-evaluated according to criteria updated in 2011.

24. Why was it established that the distance between potential treatment centre sites and a provincial road must not exceed 2 km?

The RSTSTC must be situated at a maximum distance of two kilometres from a main road in order to limit the costs of construction and maintenance of an access road to the site. Furthermore, septic pumping companies were consulted on this point. Generally, they recommend limiting trucking off provincial highways to lessen the impact on motorists and residents, while lowering the risk of mechanical failure that could affect their fleet of vehicles.

In this regard, the main roads were identified as follows: Highway 5 and provincial roads 105, 148, 307, 309 and 366.

25. The Ottawa River has a much higher rate of flow than the Gatineau River. Why was it not chosen to receive the treated water?

Both those rivers have very high dilution rates. Given those high dilution rates, the difference between the two rivers is not significant.

For instance, the treatment centre should produce approximately 200 m³/day of treated water. The Gatineau River has an equivalent rate of flow every 0.5 seconds and the Ottawa River every 0.12 seconds.

Similar projects were undertaken on waterways with a much lower rate of flow than that of the Gatineau River. As a comparison, the future MRC centre will treat roughly double the amount of wastewater than what is treated at the Kazabazua centre. And, the Gatineau River has a flow rate about 40 times higher.

26. Why did the consultation on March 15, 2011, deal mainly with potential installation sites for the centre and not also on the technologies?

The concepts and technologies proposed by the consulting firm for the project were presented during a public consultation session held on June 28, 2010, in the municipality of Val-des-Monts. About sixty citizens attended the meeting. Eleven (11) people registered to ask questions and give comments to MRC representatives. Five (5) briefs were written and given to the MRC at that meeting.

The MRC considers that the participation at that democratic exercise and the many questions and comments received allowed us to make an in-depth analysis of the options proposed by CIMA+. That is why the MRC decided to devote most of the consultation session held on March 15, 2011, to the selection of potential sites.

27. The project has now gone beyond the time frame set initially. In view of that, how will the schedule be adjusted? What will happen once the public consultation stage is completed?

The consultation stage is crucial and the MRC wants to take all the time required to ensure that the results satisfy both the Council and the population. Once this important stage is completed, the MRC will produce a new schedule that will be consistent with the results of the consultation and the delays that have occurred so far.

28. Will this project bring about a drop in the value of properties in the sector?

A priori, no assessment expert could hope to predict the reaction of market players or the impact that the event will have on values entered on the assessment roll.

According to the *Act respecting municipal taxation*, real values entered on the triennial assessment role (period of 3 years) of a municipality are based on the condition of the buildings and market conditions noted on July 1st, a year and a half before the role becomes effective. For instance, an assessment role effective for 2012-2013-2014 will be based on conditions existing as of July 1st, 2010.

A summary review of recent experiences (treatment of wastewater in Wakefield and Farm Point) has shown that new and comparable infrastructures had no negative influence on the value of buildings in surrounding sectors.

It was even noted that in some cases, there was an above-average increase in values.

Also, according to literature consulted on the subject, some similar situations created uncertainty in the short term. Whether the drop in value was real or simply a result of a perception, the uncertainty soon disappeared and the market reacted quickly upwards.

In conclusion, the MRC considers that establishing such an infrastructure presents a minor and very short-term risk of a negative impact on the value of properties located near the RSTSTC.

29. Will the MRC be legally responsible should there be damage to material goods, the environment or to human beings?

Should the damages be linked to the operation of the future RSTSTC, the MRC's responsibility will have to be established by the proper authorities or by the courts. In any case, the MRC and its staff will respectively assume their share of responsibility.

It should be noted that the MRC will, at all times, hold an insurance policy covering the damage caused to material goods, the environment or to human beings, and brought about by the operation of the centre.