



## The United Sludge-Free Alliance Recommended Reading

*From The Community Press, Ontario, Canada*

### **Biosolids foe abandoning dream home**

**Posted by Mark Hoult, September 30, 2009**

Trent Hills – Wendy and William Deavitt are walking away from their dream property, a hobby farm outside Warkworth they purchased in 2001.

The couple put their property up for sale two years ago, after living for more than a year with a variety of illnesses they maintain were caused by the application of biosolids on the fields around their home.

Since putting the property on the market they have reduced the price by \$60,000, with no success.

Recently a family expressed strong interest, but when they learned that waste sludge had been applied nearby they backed out and refused to even come out and view the property, Deavitt said.

“They have horses and they won’t even come and look at the house, because they are too afraid of what it would do to the animals, and so they should be.”

Deavitt said real estate agents can’t put a house on the market without disclosing any potential environmental concerns, including biosolids – a byproduct of the human waste treatment process that’s used as fertilizer.

“If you try to sell your property and you don’t disclose, you leave yourself open to a lawsuit,” she said, noting that many potential buyers of rural properties are also now very aware of the controversy surrounding the application of waste sludge on agricultural land across the province.

So although the neighbouring farmer did not apply biosolids to his fields in 2008 or this year, Deavitt said her family can’t take the chance of being there if the tanker trucks appear again, a development she considers likely, especially since the provincial government is set to remove the requirement for certificates of approval to apply the sludge.

“We’re at the point now we feel we’ve lost our battle. It’s over. I can’t live like this any more. I can’t live in fear anymore. So we will hand the keys over to the mortgager and we will walk down that driveway and away from our dream. We love this property. Up until 2006 we enjoyed this property immensely, and then all hell broke loose, and it’s been a nightmare, a living hell ever since.”

The nightmare began in 2006 when she and her husband began experiencing fatigue, respiratory distress, kidney dysfunction, urinary tract infections and diarrhea after biosolids were applied to the fields surrounding their six-acre property.

Other couples, including Dianne and Wayne Cooke and Linda and Wayne Donaldson, also fell ill, as did Deavitt's animals. At first every one of the animals in her barn developed coughs, runny noses and conjunctivitis. A two-month-old colt went into respiratory distress, and her mare began having irregular heat cycles. The mare also developed swollen lymph nodes.

Deavitt said all the symptoms have disappeared since she moved the animals to another property.

Blood tests taken by Toronto toxicologist Dr. Anne Mildon showed that Deavitt's own blood had elevated levels of chromium, potassium and sodium. Chromium is a hard metal with a high melting point that is used as a green pigment in paints, ceramics and varnishes, and in the making of stainless steel and leather. It is one of the contaminants that Deavitt, Cooke and Donaldson said made them sick.

All three couples were found to have high levels of various metals in their bodies, said Deavitt, who organized public meetings and became part of a committee formed to raise awareness of the biosolids issue.

Deavitt said she will walk away from her dream home "with her head held high" and continue the fight after her family moves to Campbellford.

"We need to get on with our lives. We can't continue to have this stress anymore. I will fight this better without the stress."

Deavitt said she is disappointed that Trent Hills council did not at least provide moral support and call for a complete moratorium on the spreading of waste sludge on farm fields. Other municipalities, including Prince Edward County, have called for a moratorium until complete studies have been carried out, and Trent Hills should have done the same, she said.

"That's not supporting your constituents as far as I'm concerned. That's avoiding the issue."

But Mayor Hector Macmillan said he and other members of council "are very concerned about biosolids" and have been to numerous meetings to learn more about the issue. But without a change in legislation there was no possible effective help the municipality could have given Deavitt and her family, he said.

"At the end of the day there are many unknowns, there is no doubt about that, but municipalities don't control the legislative process. And, contrary to popular belief, a municipality does not have the authority to stop another municipality, through a contractor, from bringing in biosolids," he said, noting that the biosolids being spread in the municipality come from Cobourg, not Trent Hills, where the waste is de-watered and put in a landfill.

Deavitt and her family will leave their Warkworth-area home Oct. 1. And then, Deavitt said, she will continue fighting for a moratorium and a "proper health study" she believes and hopes will bring the province to its senses and end the process of turning rural Ontario into "a toxic waste dump."

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