

Who speaks for a community when the New Sewerage Regulations fail?

In the fall of 2009 a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner (ROWP) installed a septic system on a waterfront property with a history of flooding at Wasa Lake. The previous owner had been unable to install a system under the old septic regulations due to setbacks and elevations. A local ROWP had been consulted and he and his engineer were not comfortable with the measurements. The property was purchased by a new owner and a system was installed by another ROWP. Phone calls to the Wasa Lake Land Improvement District ensued. (WLLID)

The WLLID is a form of government and as such advocates on behalf of the community of Wasa on issues relating to water quality and quantity. These are the organizations and individuals the WLLID contacted over a one year period:

1. Interior Health
2. Area E Director to the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK)
3. RDEK Building Department
4. Office of the Ombudsperson
5. WLLID Environmental Lawyer, and Geotechnical Engineer
6. MLA Columbia River - Revelstoke
7. BC Onsite Sewage Assoc (BCOSSA - Member Assoc.)
8. Applied Science of Technologies and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC -Provincial Licensing body)
9. Practice Review Board of the ASTTBC.

The outcome? The licence of the ROWP was suspended.

The cost to the WLLID was \$3,271.00. Not a true reflection of the actual cost if volunteers were paid.

Questions:

Should a ROWP both install and inspect their own systems?

In matters of public health, should the government shift its responsibilities to "industry"?

Can a resident do this kind of advocacy? Yes, but unlikely.

The question is not, can a resident do this, but WHY should he have to do this?

Where do we go from here? The WLLID has asked a retired public health officer, living at Wasa Lake to consider these questions. Potential of groundwater / surface water contamination? Total overlay of septic systems / aquifer? Different infrastructure for sewerage? Cap on population / properties on the current system, with infrastructure? GIS mapping of existing septic systems will be an option.

Submitted by the Wasa Lake Land Improvement District - April 2011