



## Capital Region Workshop Summary

Workshop Date: April 13, 2017

Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location: 1600 Buffalo Place

### INTRODUCTION

The City of Winnipeg (the 'City') is developing a Biosolids Land Application program. Biosolids are a nutrient-rich, solid by-product of wastewater treatment and when applied to agricultural land brings much needed nutrients to the soil. To introduce the project and collect input from regional stakeholders, the project team facilitated a Capital Region Workshop. The intent of the workshop was to present high-level program considerations and solicit input from organizations with regional interests and knowledge of the biosolids sector, policy and regulatory requirements and constraints, and local community issues and concerns.

### WORKSHOP FORMAT

The Capital Region Workshop was held on Thursday, April 13, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at WSP's office at 1600 Buffalo Place. The workshop included a 30 minute presentation with a 10 minute question and answer period, followed by small group discussion and task work. Fifty-four stakeholders were invited to the workshop, and a total of 17 stakeholders attended. Stakeholders in attendance represented provincial interests (i.e., agriculture, water, public health, and community and regional planning) and special interest groups.

Stakeholders worked collaboratively in small groups through a series of tasks presented in stakeholder workbooks. The tasks sought feedback and input on guiding principles, opportunities and constraints, as well as community interest and outreach strategies for the biosolids land application program. As stakeholders worked through each task, ideas and comments were recorded on large flip-chart paper, which were later shared back to the larger group. Stakeholders also had the option to record their individual comments in their workbook, which was submitted at the end of the workshop. Before leaving, stakeholders were asked to complete an exit survey which provided an additional opportunity for stakeholders to share general comments or questions they had regarding the material presented and the format of the workshop.

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## WHAT WE HEARD

### TASK 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Question 1:** *From your organization's perspective, what should be the guiding principles for the City of Winnipeg Biosolids Land Application program?*

The guiding principles suggested by stakeholders are presented as four themes:

- Protection of the Environment:
  - Environmental stewardship, surface water protection, prevention of nutrients and pathogens from entering the receiving stream, reducing greenhouse gases, agricultural awareness (the 4 R's, right rate, right time, right place, right source), and proper monitoring for environmental health.
- Protection of Public Health:
  - Emerging substances of concern (pharmaceuticals, personal care products, industrial contaminants, etc.), ensuring food safety, odour management, and application of the precautionary principle, good neighbour principle, and proper monitoring for public health.
- Public Awareness and Education:
  - Creating transparency, sharing knowledge, partnering with educational institutions, providing opportunities to learn about biosolids, demonstrating suitability using local scientific evidence, and monitoring and reporting.
- Building Relationships:
  - Economic benefits to farmers, and cooperative relationships with regulatory body, producers, and municipalities.

Stakeholders were asked to identify the guiding principles they considered most important for the Biosolid Land Application program. Stakeholders indicated that the guiding principles presented under the theme of protection of the environment is the most important followed by the guiding principles of protection of public health, public awareness and education, and building relationships.

### TASK 2: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR BIOSOLIDS LAND APPLICATION

**Question 1:** *From your organization's perspective, what are the existing opportunities for the City of Winnipeg Biosolids Land Application program?*

Stakeholders indicated that applying biosolids to agricultural land creates opportunities that benefit agricultural producers, which include the reuse of nutrients as a soil amendment, improving soil structure, and increasing soil organic matter. In addition, stakeholders shared that biosolids land application would minimize anthropogenic waste being sent to the landfill, and thus, would likely increase the lifespan of the landfill. Stakeholders also noted that land application would increase carbon sequestration and reduce the production of greenhouse gases directly attributed to the City of Winnipeg. Educating the public on biosolids and wastewater treatment, as well as developing partnerships with neighbouring municipalities and academic institutions were also identified by stakeholders as opportunities for the program.

**Question 2:** *From your organization's perspective, what are the existing constraints for the City of Winnipeg Biosolids Land Application program?*

Stakeholders shared a number of program constraints, including costs, public perception, municipal and landowner cooperation, lack of data, and suitable land for biosolids land application. Stakeholders suggested that the costs to upgrade the North End Sewage Treatment Plant and program operation costs may outweigh the benefits of biosolids land



application. Stakeholders noted that limited public awareness and public knowledge of biosolids, as well as potentially uncooperative land producers and/or municipalities may prevent biosolids land application from occurring. Stakeholders suggested that gaps in the literature, such as the potential harm of emerging substances of concern, as well as potential gaps in agronomic data may be a program constraint as this information is important for ensuring that land application is occurring with minimal risks to environmental and human health. The suitability of agricultural land to accept biosolids is an additional constraint suggested by stakeholders. Soil properties, local drainage patterns, risk of overland flooding, local concerns about agricultural bio-security, and other existing nutrient application programs will all influence the location of where the biosolids may be applied.

### **TASK 3: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY INTERESTS AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

**Question 1:** *From your organization's perspective, how may the Biosolids Land Application program affect municipal stakeholders, landowners, and community members?*

Stakeholders suggested that the program may result in community, environmental, and economic impacts, as well as the program may create general concerns and questions. Stakeholders specifically noted that the program may result in increased truck traffic resulting in additional dust being generated and wear on municipal roads, reduced property values, impacts to public health (i.e., odour, pathogens, and contaminants entering our food source), and nutrient loading to waterways impacting downstream communities. Stakeholders noted that municipalities and community members may ask what the value or benefit of biosolids land application is to their community. In addition, stakeholders suggested that environmental groups may seek information to questions regarding the nutrient properties of biosolids, the rate of crop nutrient uptake, and risks related to emerging substances of concern and bio-security. In addition, stakeholders also identified that the program may result in economic benefits for local agricultural producers.

**Question 2:** *Our next step is to engage with municipal stakeholders in areas where there are opportunities for biosolids land application. In your opinion, who should we engage with and how?*

Stakeholders suggested that municipal councils, conservation districts, agricultural producers and community residents be engaged through one-on-one meetings, small group meetings, open houses and social media. Stakeholders also suggested to attend and share information at local events organized by the community or special interest groups, such as tradeshow, educational events, community fairs, and fall suppers. When communicating with municipalities and local community members, stakeholders noted that all material should use plain language with relatable explanations. Stakeholders also added that finding allies and local community champions, such as scientists or engineers in the field, agricultural producers, and/or special interest groups, may further enhance the public engagement process by offering a neutral position and strengthen the science behind the program.

**Question 3:** *How can the project team best manage the issues that may be considered controversial about the program?*

Stakeholders suggested that efforts should be first and foremost directed towards actively getting the message out about the program. Billboards, television ads, attending local events, hosting open houses, and fact sheets with frequently asked questions were all suggested as ways to ensure that community members are aware of the program. Communicating why the City is pursuing biosolids land application, the environmental and economic benefits of the program, how the program will benefit communities, and the experience of other jurisdictions was suggested by stakeholders as information that may help alleviate concerns regarding potentially controversial issues. Stakeholders also noted that having scientific information available when requested, and committing to a transparent process through public reporting may be helpful. Being approachable, using humour, and making people comfortable were suggestions that stakeholders believed could also help manage any potential issue or concern raised by municipal stakeholders and/or community members.



## NEXT STEPS

The feedback provided by stakeholders who attended the Capital Region Workshop provides valuable insight on the program from a regional perspective. The input received will be considered in the development of the Biosolids Land Application program, the location(s) of biosolids land application sites, and upcoming public engagement events with municipal stakeholders.

To support a transparent process, the presentation from the Capital Region Workshop and this memo will be directly shared with stakeholders who participated in the workshop as well as will be posted on the project website.