

Dear Property Owner:

The Timiskaming Health Unit inspects septic systems to ensure they are working properly. Please be aware that the Timiskaming Health Unit would like to bring to your attention the issue of systems bordering lakes and rivers in the District of Timiskaming and the Municipality of Temagami.

Such systems may need to be brought into compliance with Ontario Building Code (OBC) standards. With your cooperation, we look to eliminate this source of pollution in order to protect the well-being of our local residents, environment and economy.

Know the law

The Building Code Act states that a building with a failing septic system is 'unsafe'. If a building is found 'unsafe', the property owner is **required by law** to bring it into compliance with building code standards. An 'unsafe' building can be temporarily condemned until it meets these standards. A failing septic system is also a public health hazard. Under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the property owner **must** immediately eliminate any such health hazard.

Why would my septic system fail?

A decaying steel septic tank is the most common reason for septic system failure. Prior to 1982, installation of steel septic tanks was standard practice. However, steel septic tanks are known to rust and leak over time. Under the OBC a septic tank is defined as a 'water-tight' compartment. If a septic tank leaks sewage, it is no longer 'water-tight'. For this reason, installation of steel tanks is now prohibited. If you still use a steel septic tank, odds are it is leaking and needs replacing.

Volunteer Repair

Properties with septic systems installed before 1980 and systems bordering lakes and rivers create the greatest risk. If a septic system is found to be 'unsafe', the owner **must** take the necessary steps to make it safe. Site plan control fees normally required of residents of the Municipality of Temagami will be dropped for septic tank and leaching bed replacement. To promote efficient use of public resources, voluntary repair of failing septic systems is strongly encouraged.

Why is this important to me?

Raw sewage may contain harmful bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Raw sewage from a failing septic system can seep into the water supply and make us sick. Failing septic systems are also responsible for increased nutrient levels in lakes and rivers. High nutrient levels cause excess plant and algae growth which in turn lowers water oxygen levels leading to reduced fish populations. Revenue earned from eco-tourism is important to our local economy. We must therefore protect the resources we have today in order to ensure tomorrow's success.

For more information, please contact Doug Metson, Chief Building Official, at the Timiskaming Health Unit Land Control office at Tel.: 705-544-2221, Fax: 705-544-8698.



Rusted steel tank with large holes



Rusted and leaking steel tank



Long-lasting plastic tank

