

Biosolid nestles in near day care

By MARY ELLEN MacINTYRE Truro Bureau
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NOEL — There's a pile of fertilizer in a field behind the volunteer fire department in this little Hants County community. Perhaps no one would have taken notice if there wasn't also a daycare centre in the building.

Perhaps if the material was run-of-the-mill cow manure, no one would have even blinked. But the material is what is known as a biosolid, the end product of what begins in the toilets and sinks of Halifax Regional Municipality.

After the sewage is treated at one of three water treatment plants in that municipality, it is further processed by N-Viro, which has the municipal contract, at the Aerotech Business Park.

The company's website describes the end product as a "biologically stable, low-odour, safe, soil-like material."

No one from N-Viro was available to comment Thursday, but the product has been licensed for sale to farmers and deemed safe as a soil amendment.

Fred Blois figures that doesn't make sense.

"I don't think farmers are falling all over themselves to buy this soil amendment and if they're growing food with it, it should be labelled as such," said Mr. Blois, a member of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and a member of the former biosolid advisory committee.

"The thing is there is no real testing of this material," he said. "This material is being spread on the ground and no one knows anything about it."

The material is tested for heavy metals, E. coli and salmonella, but Mr. Blois suggests it should also be tested for drugs and chemicals, considering what some people pour down drains.

One source who didn't want to be identified said he believes it's important to ask questions.

"That's all I'm saying. From the municipality to the province and on to the federal government, we should all be satisfied that this product is safe and that it's tested."

He said neighbours don't like the smell from the product.

"It smells like stale urine or an old outhouse," he said.

Area councillor Wayne Green said Thursday he hasn't received many calls of concern.

"I received one call and there are 2,500 residents in this district, but I'm taking the concern to council to see what we can find out," said Mr. Green. "It's been approved by the Department of Environment for use in agriculture and there are stringent guidelines to even buy the stuff."

For his part, Mr. Blois figures it's a classic case of urban waste becoming a rural problem.

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