

Mixed reaction after NDP rejects ban on biosolids

Dexter government advises farmers to carefully consider use as fertilizer

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[Also article in the Chronicle Herald "N.S. won't ban biosolids on farmland", January 26, 2010]

Opponents say they're disappointed with the Dexter government's refusal to ban the spreading of Halifax sewage sludge on Nova Scotia's farmlands.

The NDP announced the decision late last week, qualifying it by advising farmers to consider the impact on buy local initiatives as they decide whether to actually use the sludge as fertilizer.

The province rejected a request from Kings County council to ban the spreading of the treated Halifax sludge as a substitute for regular fertilizer.

Fred Blois of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network has also lobbied for a ban, and he's disappointed with the government decision.

He says he's concerned by the possibility that the sludge screening process won't catch every harmful substance in the mix.

"There are over 100,000 man made chemicals out there and it's impossible to test for all of them," he said. "They just simply have to find a new way of doing this."

He says the stuff is toxic and is glad the government at least cautioned farmers about its use, but Henry Vissers of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture insists the sludge is safe and it won't impact on local product sales.

"It shouldn't have any impact on buy local initiatives", he said. "Biosolids are not allowed to be used on cash crops that are grown for food like vegetables, fruits things like that."

It is, however, used on pasture land and opponents say that means it has entered the food chain.