



## Summer Village of Ma-Me-O Beach

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### Council Receives Petition on Local Wastewater System

**Petition organizers believe that Council should not proceed with the completion of our local wastewater system at Ma-Me-O Beach.**

On May 1, 2017, Ma-Me-O Council received a petition containing the legally required signatures of approximately 10% of our local ratepayers. The petition requested that the authority given to our Chief Administrative Officer for awarding the final contract for the construction of the local wastewater system be rescinded.

The petition and signatures may be viewed during office hours at the Summer Villages office.

In an additional document dated April 22, 2017, the organizers of the petition stated that:

- "...proceeding with the tender is not in the best interest of our residents and that not all of the proper steps have been done to proceed to this step."
- "...there are no newsletters and information is not being given to us."
- "Council and Administration have their own agendas when there are projects to be discussed; they all seem to be reluctant to be transparent with residents."
- "...there is no communication between our village councils."
- Low Pressure systems (LPS) "are definitely not for the situation that we have in Ma-Me-O."
- "...there's also the alternative of staying with holding tanks."

Organizers of the petition are identified as Dan Neil, Ron Lupton, Stan Hayter and Caroline Huddleston. It is their opinion that the Low Pressure System which has been designed for our Summer Village is not workable and the engineers who have certified that it would be an effective system for Ma-Me-O are not to be believed.

In the opinion of the petition organizers, low-flow wastewater volumes during the off season will cause a buildup of sediment and plug the line and those same low flows will make the line subject to freezing. They have stated that the proposed sewer will release odours, the possibility of leaks has been ignored and that wastewater engineers believe, wherever possible, a gravity system is the preferred alternative for a sewer installation.

**Your Council places great confidence in the credentials of the project wastewater engineers. These experts certify that the system is a practical, functional and cost-effective way to meet the needs of our Summer Village. We disagree with the negative opinions of the petitioners.**

## Council's Response to Petitioner Statements

1. *"....not in the best interest of our residents and that not all of the proper steps have been done to proceed to this step."*

Ma-Me-O Council believes that the building of a local wastewater infrastructure is absolutely in the best interest of our residents. We believe it will help improve the health of the lake and result in an increased quality of lake life for residents and visitors. All of the finances have been secured and there will be no additional costs to ratepayers for completing construction of the system. The recommended system consists of a network of high quality plastic pipes in the ground to which residents will be able to connect if they wish. Low pressure systems require little or no maintenance. Ongoing maintenance costs for the system and for those who connect will be minimal.

All the proper steps have been taken and the Summer Village has followed a well-defined, standard procedure for the issuance and review of the tender documents. The engineering firm (MPE) prepared the tender documents and with Council's approval has released those documents for bid. That information was posted to the Service Alberta APC website and the MPE engineers have met with prospective bidders to review the project on location. MPE will be responsible for evaluating the bids received and recommending a contractor. Once MPE selects a contractor and recommends acceptance of that bid, if the cost is within preliminary estimates, Council will be able to award the tender for construction.

2. *"....there are no newsletters and information is not being given to us."*

There have been a range of updates and background materials provided to ratepayers over the past year. Information has been provided as to the progress of the regional project and Ma-Me-O's role as the lead municipality in the securing of significant Federal and Provincial government funding for the building of the Southside Wastewater project. Ratepayers know that hooking up to the system is not mandatory and no one will be required to connect until they choose to do so. Council issued a newsletter in March with the most up to date information available at that time. The newsletter provided detail regarding the phases of the project and the schedule and further information will be provided as it becomes available. The latest update explained that the project has now been sent out for tender.

3. *"Council and Administration seem to be reluctant to be transparent with residents."*

Council and Administration have been issuing newsletters, posting information on the website and answering residents' questions when they stop us on the street, phone, or come in to the office. There is no attempt to be anything but forthright about the project and its progress.

4. *"....there is no communication between our village Councils."*

Each Summer Village is responsible for the approval and execution of their own wastewater contract. All of the South Side municipalities are members of the South Side Wastewater Committee and will become members of the South Side Regional Wastewater Commission when it is approved. In addition to the meetings, Councillors discuss issues with their neighbouring municipalities on a regular basis.

The systems are not identical in each Summer Village. For example, under the present construction plan, the Summer Village of Ma-Me-O Beach will be installing shallow-bury, insulated and heat traced lines. Ma-Me-O is completely independent of the other participating Municipalities as Ma-Me-O has a direct line to the regional sewer down Highway 13A.

5. *"Low Pressure systems are definitely not for the situation that we have in Ma-Me-O. There are concerns regarding low flow volumes during the off season causing buildup of sediment."*

In fact, a low pressure system is the only practical system that can be built at Ma-Me-O. Given the flat terrain of our village a gravity system would have to be built well below ground to ensure any flow of sewage. Excavation at or below the frost level is not feasible at Ma-Me-O due to our sandy, wet soil conditions. That's why the engineers have developed an insulated, shallow-bury pipeline design with heat tracing for our system.

Our sewer system has been designed by a highly respected engineering firm with direct experience in low pressure collection wastewater systems. The design has accounted for the range of expected wastewater flows including the low flow during the winter months and the high flow during the holiday weekends in summer. The design included calculations of hydraulic considerations, the size and potential number of individual holding tanks, the size of the pumps and the size and pressure rating of the pipe system and all potential valves and appurtenances.

As only liquid effluent will be pumped out of holding tanks there will be a minimum of sediment-producing waste entering the line. Should sediment become a problem, the system has been designed to allow for any required flushing. Many of these low pressure systems are being used with great success throughout Alberta and Canada. Such a system has been in place in Lac LaBiche for almost a decade with no problems. Low pressure sewer systems are very low cost to maintain, and are a highly functional, cost effective alternative to a gravity sewer system.

6. *"The lines may freeze during low flow periods."*

As previously noted, in Ma-Me-O, with the high ground water table and flowing sand at normal depths, the decision has been made to install the system at a minimum 1.25 m depth. Concerns around freezing have been addressed by providing both insulation and heat tracing to avoid freezing in the low flow winter months. The heat tracing system is thermostatically controlled and alarm monitored.

7. *"Fetter of Associated Engineering and Breunig of MPE engineering are on record that a gravity system is the best alternative for a sewer."*

Studies have already been done to determine if it is feasible to use a gravity system at Ma-Me-O. Early in the analysis of best construction approaches, Jeff Fetter of Associated Engineering was hired to investigate a gravity system for Ma-Me-O. It was his conclusion that building a gravity system would be impractical and prohibitively expensive compared to the current design. Mike Bruenig, president of MPE agreed with Associated's conclusions.

As previously mentioned, in our community with a very high water table and flowing sand soil conditions, it is extremely difficult to stabilize the ground for a deep bury system of any kind. In addition, our relatively flat community does not have sufficient grade for a gravity system and multiple pump stations would be required to make such a system work. These are the reasons why both the engineering firms and our project manager have endorsed the low pressure system as the best alternative.

8. *"Safety next to the lake is a concern. There was a major rupture in a LPS line in 2016."*

Given our system design, the engineers believe that the chance of a rupture in the system is extremely small. Should one occur, the most likely causes would be construction damage or a frozen line. As previously noted, with the insulation and heat tracing on the lines, freezing should not be an issue.

There will be controls through the development permit process that will ensure that proper procedures are followed as individual lots are connected to the line. Additionally, the engineers have designed the system with numerous isolation valves to control leaks should any part of the line be compromised.

9. *"There are odour issues."*

The system has been designed with vents at high points in the lines to allow for release of gases. On occasion, the vents will emit an insignificant amount of gas. When compared to the huge volumes of gases released by a vacuum truck, odours will be minimal. Each vent will be located as far as possible from residences and will be equipped with replaceable carbon charcoal filters to minimize any offensive odours released.

10. *"there's the alternative of staying with holding tanks."*

No one will be required to hook up to the system. Anyone who opts to continue using pump out trucks will be free to continue to do so. There will be no penalties or additional costs for those who cannot afford or choose not to connect their tanks to the local line. However, if a ratepayer decides to connect in the future, having the lines in the ground will make connection a straight forward process.

At the 2016 Annual Information Meeting, there was a clear message given to Council that the status quo with holding tanks was not acceptable. When Caroline Huddleston (one of the present petition organizers) called for a vote on Council's authority to proceed with the construction of a sewer system, Council noted that the overwhelming majority rejected that position and wanted Council to proceed.

**Don't be cynical about the prospect of changing your community for the better. Those opposed to the completion of the local sewer have been providing ratepayers with incomplete and incorrect information about Low Pressure Sewer systems. That information is at odds with the information provided by the professional engineers who build and design these systems. If you have been made less confident about the value or the workability of the proposed local system, we urge you to attend a special sewer information meeting to be held at the Towne Hall on June 3 at 1:00 p.m.**

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