

Municipality of East Ferris

Report to Council

Report No.: COMM-2024-05

Date: November 12, 2024

Originator: Greg Kirton, Director of Community Services

Subject: Septic Inspection Program – Strategic Plan Initiative

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council for the Municipality of East Ferris not pursue any additional septic inspection programs within the municipality at this time but directs staff to undertake a public education campaign about best practices around septic system maintenance.
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BACKGROUND

The East Ferris Strategic Plan contains the following action item in the “Protect Our Environment” section:

“Review the opportunity to reintroduce septic inspection programs for permanent and seasonal residents”

Throughout 2024, staff has investigated the logistics of implementing new septic inspection programs and engaged in discussions with North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA) staff about specific implementation options and challenges. The NBMCA currently implements a mandatory inspection program focused on the Callander Issue Contributing Area, which impacts approximately 139 properties in East Ferris. This program is given special status under Source Water Protection legislation and operates differently than an elective septic inspection program would.

If the NBMCA were to implement a septic inspection program on behalf of East Ferris on lakefront properties that are not captured under special programming such as the NBMCA Source Water Protection Plans, then this program would be voluntary and property owners could refuse entry and participation. The program would also be limited to visual inspections of septic systems and would not include any internal examination of systems.

The NBCMA does not have the resources currently to administer a program like this without additional staff and supporting resources; however, they would potentially be willing to administer the program if East Ferris provided those resources. This would include providing financial resources to cover new staff, vehicle and travel costs, equipment, training and all

incidental office related costs. The costs would likely surpass the costs associated with East Ferris hiring a full-time staff member, but hiring a staff member would be difficult for us because we do not have the expertise in our staff complement to provide guidance on septic matter, whereas the NBMCA does.

Given that the expenses to administer a program like this would be very significant and the program participation would be voluntary, staff are of the opinion that this would not be the best use of resources. It is likely that property owners with failing systems that need inspection would be the ones that would elect to not participate in the program, which would defeat the point of the program to start with. Further, when a system is failing and it is a significant risk to the surrounding area, the NBMCA does have the authority to enter a property and address this on a case-by-case emergency basis.

As an alternative measure to a septic inspection program, staff recommend that the municipality undertake a public education campaign in the community to spread awareness about best practices around septic maintenance and early warning signs for septic system damage and failure. This would be in the form of an information sheet mailed out to all residents in the community with supplemental information posts on our social media and website.

A public education campaign will represent an extremely small fraction of the cost of an inspection program and will reach all residents in the community. For the rare worst-case scenario of a failing septic system, the NBMCA would retain the authority to address it on a case-by-case basis.

OPTIONS

1. Option 1

That Council does not pursue any additional septic inspection programs within the municipality at this time but directs staff to undertake a public education campaign about best practices around septic system maintenance.

2. Option 2

That Council directs staff to formally approach the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority to discuss the implementation of a septic inspection program.

3. Option 3

That Council not pursue any additional septic inspection programs within the municipality at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the recommended public education campaign would be approximately \$1,500.00 for printing and mailout fees. This amount may be further reduced if the mailout can accompany the next round of tax bills, if envelope space allows.

The financial implications of running a program through the NBMCA with the required staffing costs would be somewhere in the range of \$150,000.00 on a yearly basis.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that East Ferris does not pursue any additional septic inspection programs within the municipality at this time but does undertake a public education campaign about best practices around septic system maintenance.

Respectfully Submitted,



Greg Kirton, RPP, MCIP
Director of Community Services

I concur with this report,
and recommendation



Jason Trottier, BBA, MPA, CPA, CMA
CAO/Treasurer