

Canada-wide Approach for the Management of Wastewater Biosolids Q & As

1. What are municipal biosolids?

Municipal biosolids are organic-based products produced from the treatment of municipal sludge. They can be solids, semi-solid or liquid. Municipal biosolids are municipal sludge which has been treated to meet jurisdictional standards, requirements or guidelines and is a mixture of water and solids separated from various types of wastewater as a result of natural or artificial processes.

2. Why do we need a Canada-wide approach?

In 2009 the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) endorsed The *Canada-wide Strategy for the Management of Municipal Wastewater Effluent* (the Strategy). The Strategy sets out a harmonized framework to manage discharges from more than 3,500 wastewater facilities in Canada and provides a path forward for achieving regulatory clarity in managing municipal wastewater effluent across the country. Performance standards contained in the Strategy are intended to increase protection for human health and the environment across Canada.

The quantity of municipal biosolids produced is expected to increase as new and upgraded wastewater facilities are constructed as a result of implementation of the Strategy. Anticipating this, CCME, in consultation with interested and affected parties, developed the *Canada-wide Approach for the Management of Wastewater Biosolids* (the Approach).

3. What does this Approach promote?

The Approach promotes the beneficial use of valuable resources such as nutrients, organic matter and energy contained within municipal biosolids, municipal sludge and treated septage. Beneficial uses should be based on

- consideration of the utility and resource value (product performance)
- strategies to minimize potential risks to the environment and human health
- strategies to minimize greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- adherence to federal, provincial, territorial and municipal standards, requirements or guidelines.

4. How can municipal biosolids be beneficially managed?

Municipal biosolids, municipal sludge and treated septage can be beneficially managed in a number of ways including composting, agricultural land application and combustion for energy production. However, in Canada some municipal biosolids are still disposed of rather than being used in a beneficial manner. Disposal options include combustion without energy capture and burial in landfills, both of which are not considered to be beneficial uses. The Approach does not promote disposal; it encourages the beneficial use of municipal biosolids, municipal sludge and treated septage, while maintaining protection of the environment and human health.