

## **SUMMARY: The Accountability/Regulatory Gap: “Everybody’s business is nobody’s business.”**

City of Ottawa must extricate Ottawa Public Health (OPH) from the regulatory gap in which it finds itself by taking charge of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) deferral regarding contamination risk assessment responsibility on development sites. The resulting ‘hot potato’ leaves unaddressed expert warnings about mercury mobilization via air and water, endangering the Kanata North community. The Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition (KGPC) demands an immediate suspension of construction on this 175-acre geo-complex site and a fully transparent redo of the necessary environmental assessments to identify that it can be safely and affordably remediated.

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The community of Kanata North is currently trapped in a dangerous circular referral between provincial and municipal authorities, leaving tens of thousands of residents unprotected from potential neurotoxin exposure.

### **The Accountability/Regulatory Gap**

- **MECP (Provincial):** An Ottawa area manager states they do not oversee site-specific requirements for the current environmental assessments underway and do not provide direction on preventing health risks during soil disturbance. They have explicitly directed that health concerns be raised with Ottawa Public Health (OPH).
- **OPH (Municipal):** Dr. Arnason has stated that OPH will not intervene unless the MECP identifies a risk because it claims no authority or resources to apply to assess environmental matters.

### **The Result**

MECP says "Talk to OPH," and OPH says "We only act if MECP tells us to." This 'hot potato' approach to public safety is downright dangerous and from the perspective of the taxpayer and resident, completely unacceptable. The oversight of environmental assessment and risk, testing, monitoring and reporting in essence has been downloaded to Ontario’s developers, or the experts and subcontractors they employ. As a result, public safety protection no longer has an independent and meaningful voice at the approval table.

Such a process only works until it doesn't. By the time OPH applies a public health lens to information it receives, the dreadful damage—community-wide exposure to mobilized mercury—could well be done.

### **Expert Warnings**

We have attached a review by soil scientist **Dr. Heather McNairn**, detailing how current earthworks on this specific site can trigger environmental damage and health risks without ever tripping the existing protections systems agreed to by Ottawa's Environmental Remediation Unit (ERU) to support the ongoing work on the KGC lands. Furthermore, environmental engineer **Stephen Quigley** warns below that current activities are actively damaging the integrity of the investigative process. These experts agree: the risk of contamination could extend from local soils to the Ottawa River.

### **City action required urgently**

The Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition (KGPC), representing thousands of concerned residents, calls on the City of Ottawa to step up and take ownership immediately.

Since the MECP has deferred health oversight to OPH, the City of Ottawa must, through OPH or another vehicle, assess human exposure pathways **before** further ground and water disturbance occurs potentially worsening the risks on a development site. A reminder, in 2022, an under scoped testing process which included biased data collection determined full site remediation of all 175 acres was required.

1. **Immediate suspension of all site work.**
2. **Initiate a transparent, unbiased redo of the Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments (ESA)** for the area disrupted in early 2026 encompassing former holes 6, 7, 8, and 9, including all associated ponds and marshlands.

The Precautionary Principle, a central tenet of the value system guiding governance over health and environment matters, must be applied before a preventable health crisis occurs in Kanata North.

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**Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition**

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