

Dated: April 18th, 2026

To: Councillor Curry, Ottawa Board of Health Members

From: Concerned Scientists and Engineers

Subject: Letter of concern

We are concerned that it appears no one is proactively taking responsibility for the public health and safety risks resulting from the engineering activities at 7000 Campeau Drive (the former Kanata Lakes Golf Course).

As scientists and engineers, we recognize engineering content within the documents associated with the site activities. For example, the drawing “PROPOSED INFILTRATION BIOSWALE, EXFILTRATION MANHOLE, TEST FILL PILES” communicates explicit engineering instructions for the location of compaction piles and bioswales.

In Ontario, the Professional Engineers Act, in the interest of proactively safeguarding public welfare and the environment, requires that an engineer take responsibility for engineering decisions by applying their seal (name, PEO number, and date). We have observed that the engineering documents associated with these site activities do not appear to bear a professional engineer seal. As a result, it is not clear what elements of the design and installation have been reviewed for public safety by a responsible licensed Professional Engineer.

In response to our inquiries, the General Manager of the Ottawa Planning, Development and Building Services Department clarified that the City is depending on the proponent’s Qualified Person, who also happens to be a P.Eng. with the Paterson Group. This is presumably with respect to Ontario Regulation 153/04 of the Environmental Protection Act (Site Assessments), where a Professional Engineer is recognized as a Qualified Person. However there is no clear identifiable confirmation, based on publicly available documentation, that a Professional Engineer has assumed responsibility for the engineering design and installation through the application of a seal.

This gap in responsibility matters. There is established science regarding the migration of mercury contamination into surface and groundwater from former golf courses, as referenced in Dr. Heather McNairn’s attached report.

Who will legitimately assure the public that the risks of mobilizing mercury and arsenic contaminants—which complicates detection and makes remediation much more complex—have been fully taken into account and mitigated in the design of the bioswales and compaction piles now installed on the site?

The April 15th City update reports that mercury has been detected across the majority of tested areas, indicating that contamination is not confined to isolated locations and that full delineation remains ongoing. At the same time, the City confirms that exfiltration systems and bioswales—designed to influence water movement—are currently being installed to assess groundwater behavior. Additionally, the City has noted that site works, combined with seasonal conditions, have resulted in more significant ponding, suggesting that current activities are already influencing site drainage dynamics.

We are concerned that this sequencing introduces further risk, as infiltration-based systems are being implemented prior to completing full characterization of contaminant extent and distribution. Furthermore changes to groundwater flow paths and contaminant migration behavior may be difficult to predict or manage once established. This may have an impact beyond our community because water from this site flows to the Beaverpond, through the Kizell Creek, to the Kizell Drain, through federal NCC lands and into the Ottawa River.

We intend to request, out of professional courtesy, a site visit for this science and engineering group where the responsible engineer can explain what mobilized mercury mitigation measures were included in their design, and if they are adequate for the levels of contaminants now being reported. Any facilitation you can provide would be appreciated.

We are deeply concerned that the current site activities — specifically the installation of infiltration infrastructure, compaction piles, and bioswales over uncharacterized soils — have occurred without clear, publicly identifiable confirmation of responsible professional engineering oversight and documented mitigation of risks to public health and the environment.

While we are raising this matter of professional concern for the public wellbeing and environment please be advised our comments are not a formal engineering assessment and recommend a detailed technical review be conducted.

Sincerely,

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