

# Reinspection Programs Across Ontario

Doug Joy, Katherine Rentsch, Chris  
Kinsley

Ontario Rural Wastewater Centre  
University of Guelph

# Onsite System Reinspections

- ▶ Reinspections programs have been conducted across the province for nearly a decade
- ▶ Old provisions in the code were sometimes questionable regarding their legality
- ▶ New proposed provisions will more clearly spell out conditions under which they can be carried out

# Survey

- ▶ Many jurisdictions are or have been carrying them out
- ▶ Wanted a snap shot of what they were doing
- ▶ Provide guidance for municipalities carrying these out in the future
- ▶ Carried out in 2006

# Survey Procedure

- ▶ Letters sent to 285 Municipalities and Part 8 delivery agencies across the province
  - “Do you now or have you in the past carried out a septic reinspection program”
- ▶ 156 responded with a fax (55%)

# Survey Procedure

- ▶ 23 said yes for either now or in the past
- ▶ Followed up with a phone survey of 30 questions to get the program details
- ▶ Of the 23:
  - 5 only did them for lot severances or reported problems – took them out of the survey
  - Some of the remaining couldn't remember any of the details or didn't answer after 10 calls.
- ▶ 16 left in the survey

# Phone Survey - Topics

- ▶ How are reinspections conducted?
- ▶ How is enforcement ensured?
- ▶ How is data on existing systems collected?
- ▶ What standards are used for the various classes of systems?

# Phone Survey - Topics

- ▶ How is compliance with the existing code established?
- ▶ How is the inspection carried out? Who does it?
- ▶ What symptoms of failure are used?
- ▶ When is a more intrusive investigation required?
- ▶ What is the frequency of inspection?

# Municipalities

T. of the Archipelago	Bracebridge	T. of Georgian Bay
T. of Gravenhurst	Huntsville	T. of Lake of Bays
T. of Muskoka L.	T. of N. Frontenac	T. of Oro-Medonte
T. of Seguin	T. of Severn Peninsula	T. of S. Bruce
T. of S. Frontenac	T. of Southgate	T. of Tay
Tiny Township		

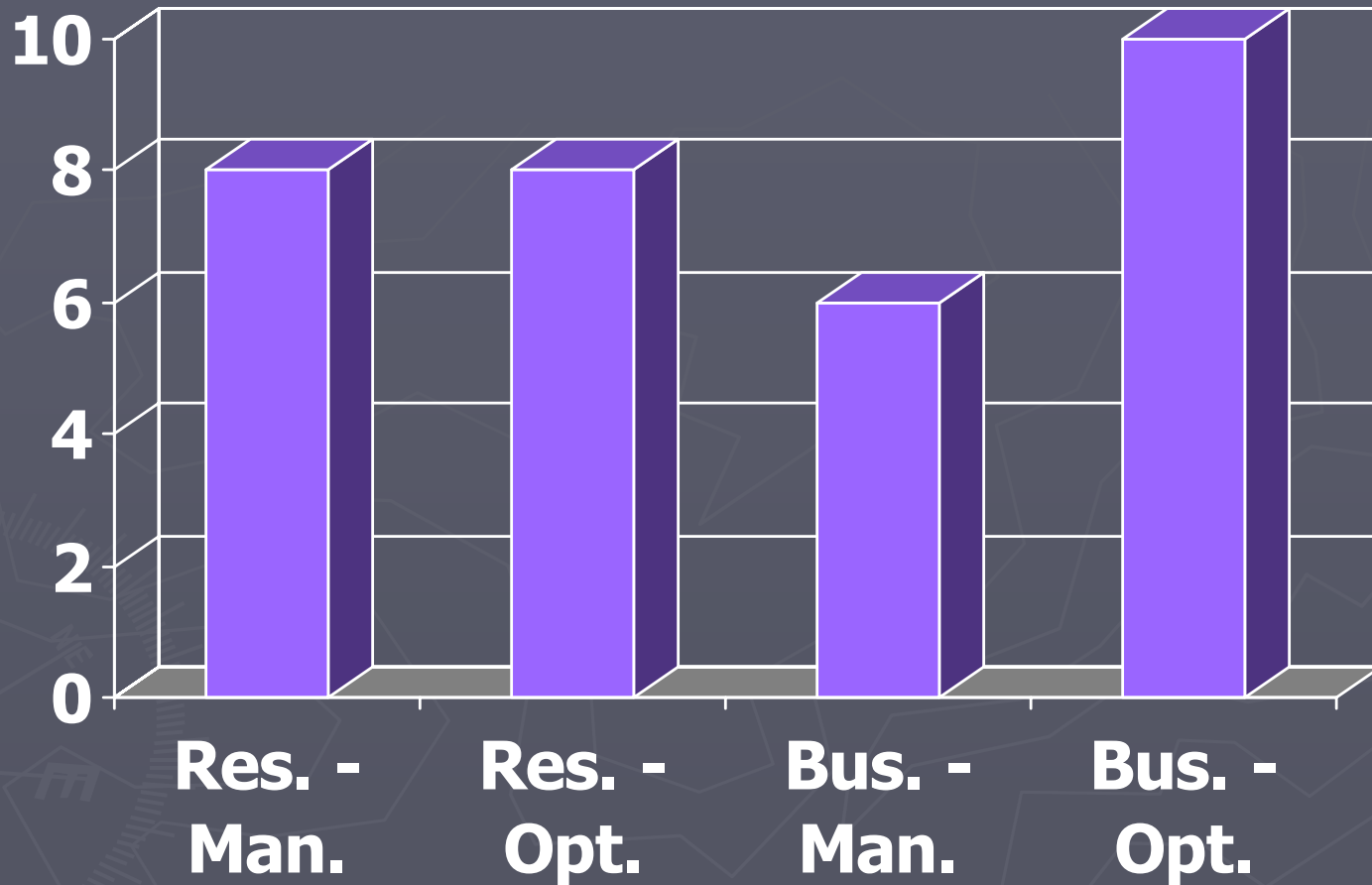
# Costs

- ▶ To do the inspections
  - \$25-\$85 (average \$65)
  - One was increasing to \$170
  - Some had arranged for set, additional, fees for tank pump outs as part of inspection
  - Some required a pump out but had made no arrangements regarding the fees

# Cost of Repairs

- ▶ From \$300 to \$20,000
- ▶ 25% of municipalities either offered or have access to some form of financial assistance
- ▶ These municipalities generally felt this was critical to being able to sell the program

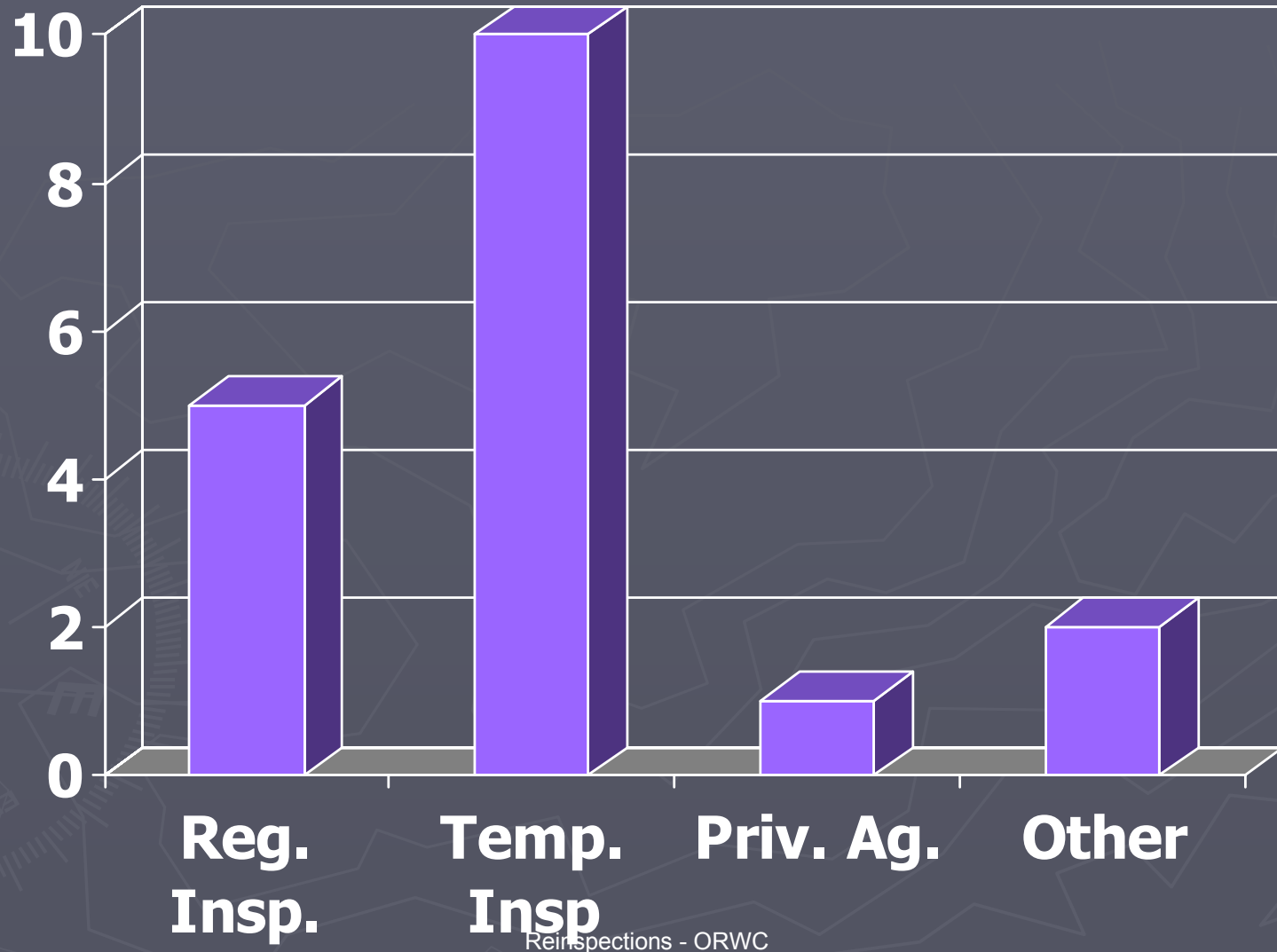
# Mandatory or Optional Programs



# How Programs are Financed

- ▶ Property Taxes (11/16)
  - Only two show on tax form
- ▶ Levies (3/16)
- ▶ Revenues from Part 8 Program (2/16)
- ▶ Other (3/16)
  - Grants, combinations

# Who Does the Reinspections



Reinspections - ORWC

# Who does reinspections

- ▶ Temporary inspectors were nearly always summer students who were:
  - trained by local staff
  - Had passed the MMAH course/exam
  - Had infield training with permanent inspectors
- ▶ Preferred because:
  - Cost effective
  - Employed at the time inspections made

# Prioritization for Reinspection

- ▶ None (5)
- ▶ Age of system/lack of permit (6)
- ▶ Advanced survey (1)
- ▶ Type of system (0)
- ▶ Risk analysis (5)
- ▶ Complaints (3)
- ▶ Volunteers (0)

# Reinspection Standards

## ► Options

- Code at the time of construction
- Present day code
- “Unsafe system”

► Most, if not all, used “Unsafe system” as the standard

# Benchmarks of Failure

- ▶ Soft ground (13)
- ▶ Surface Ponding (16)
- ▶ Tank Water Level (9)
- ▶ Setbacks (3)
- ▶ Wood or steel tank (5)
- ▶ Trees or Structure on Bed (3)
- ▶ Exceed Capacity (1)

# Activities in a Reinspection

- ▶ Review of system against permit data
- ▶ Identify location of system on property
- ▶ Surface inspection of bed & tank
- ▶ Open/examine inside of tank
- ▶ Estimate tank volume
- ▶ Pump out tank
- ▶ Estimate sludge depth/volume
- ▶ Inspect interior plumbing
- ▶ Probe leaching bed area
- ▶ Excavate bed area

# Activities in a Reinspection

- ▶ Soil sampling/testing
- ▶ Well testing/water quality analysis
- ▶ Surface drainage assessment
- ▶ Property owner interview
- ▶ Review of water consumption data
- ▶ Estimate distribution pipe length
- ▶ Estimate setback distances
- ▶ Inspect mechanical equipment

# What activities?

- ▶ Many municipalities have a two level reinspection program
- ▶ A minimal set of activities as an initial inspection
- ▶ A more extensive set of activities if something questionable was found

# What Activities in a Reinspection

▶ Review permit data	16
▶ Location of system	16
▶ Surface inspection of bed & tank	16
▶ Open/examine inside of tank	3/7
▶ Estimate tank volume	9
▶ Pump out tank	2/2
▶ Estimate sludge depth/volume	2/1
▶ Inspect interior plumbing	2
▶ Probe leaching bed area	5/5
▶ Excavate bed area	0/6

# What Activities in a Reinspection

- ▶ Soil sampling/testing 1
- ▶ Well testing 2/1
- ▶ Surface drainage 13
- ▶ Property owner interview 7/5
- ▶ Review of water consumption 1/1
- ▶ Estimate pipe length 11
- ▶ Estimate setback distances 12
- ▶ Inspect mechanical equipment 4

# Results

- ▶ On average, 25% of all systems inspected needed some form of work in a municipality
- ▶ Range was 5 to 45%, depending on municipality
- ▶ Usually higher at the start of a program
  - Doing more high-risk systems
  - Owners learn of program and do work prior to inspection after program gets going

# Types of repairs commonly reported

- ▶ Tank repair/replacement/pumping
- ▶ Surface drainage work
- ▶ Greywater discharge
- ▶ Total system repair

# Enforcement of Repairs

- ▶ Most took a “Cooperative” approach at start
  - Verbal
  - Letter
- ▶ If nothing was done, usually a second letter/phone call
- ▶ If nothing – “Orders to Comply” were used
- ▶ Is still nothing, a few had to go to court – very few (2)

# Frequency of Reinspection

- ▶ Typically 5-10 years
- ▶ Most programs on first time through basis
- ▶ Continuation pending council approval in many cases

# Final Comments

- ▶ Most of the reinspection programs to date have been in “cottage country”
- ▶ Water quality is a priority for residents and politicians
- ▶ Programs have been generally well received
- ▶ Most programs have been actively advertised in print/radio/TV/mailings to raise the level of awareness – seen as critical to the success
- ▶ The high number of necessary repairs, even simple maintenance, indicates the importance of these programs

# Acknowledgements

- ▶ Thanks to the municipalities and their employees who took the time to complete the survey
- ▶ MMAH for funding the study.

# Questions?

