

Online source: www.FlyingShingle.com/cgi-bin/coranto/viewnews.cgi?id=20120709113161736751

Sludge reaches bottom of slippery slope

Monday, July 9, 2012

The use of 'Texada Sludge' – an unpopular road maintenance material – on Gabriola roads is virtually at an end according to EMCON Supervisor Rob Heslip.

At a June 18 Gabriola Transportation Association (GTA) meeting at Agi Hall between Gabriolans and officials from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and EMCON – the company that maintains the roads on Gabriola – Heslip said there is only a small amount of Texada Sludge left in the EMCON yard. He said crews are now using an alternative product. He said the new gravel "is standing up quite well", and that there are "a lot less complaints received by our office".

As previously reported, the sludge is a type of gravel from Texada Island that turns sticky and slimy when wet. Gabriolans have, for years, complained that the substance damages the wheel wells and brakes of cars, and is an irritant to the paws of pets. EMCON representatives have said the material is fine as long as roads are properly graded and drained.

Meeting attendee Nick Doe asked whether officials have figured out why the sludge was a problem. Heslip reiterated that the problem with the sludge was a function of how it was distributed. He added that there was "a lot of lime" in the material.

As previously reported, Doe, who has analysed the substance used on Gabriola, concluded that a combination of clay and carbonates cause the problem as "clay and carbonates form the basis of a natural hydraulic cement that clings to surfaces and hinders drainage".

GTA member Randy Young pointed out that "it is essential to do a crown on the road" to provide for proper drainage. Heslip said: "We're familiar with grading procedure". Young said he knew this was so, but many Gabriola roads have been "flat-graded" and don't have a crown. Heslip said there will soon be a new grader on the island, and "the foreman has been up in Cumberland receiving some training with this new machine".

Doe also said that there was no such thing as Texada gravel, as the composition of the gravel varies depending on where on Texada the gravel originates.

GSA member Andre Lemieux said that the sludge packs "very solidly" when dry, but gets "ugly" when it is wet. One meeting attendee added that the dust created by Texada Sludge was "phenomenal". Another meeting attendee said walking on Texada Sludge was like "walking on marbles". He said he had "pulled a few people out of the ditch" because the sludge was so slippery.