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Waste turned into a valuable resource

Walker honoured with award for biosolids plant

Niagara This Week - Thorold
 By [Paul Forsyth](#)

NIAGARA — They may not be able to turn lead into gold, but Niagara's Walker Environmental group can take what you flush down the toilet and turn it into both a money-making venture and something that benefits farmers in the region.

They do it so well, in fact, that the company has been honoured by an award from the Milton-based Water Environment Association of Ontario.

The association, with a mandate of enhancing Ontario's water, presented the Exemplary Biosolids Management Award in the full-scale operating project category to Walker in a ceremony in London, Ont. On April 7.

Walker vice-president Mike Watt, who accepted the award along with Walker biosolids general manager Geoff Boyd, said Walker launched its biosolids facility at its vast complex on the Thorold-Niagara Falls border about seven years ago.

It collects the sludge byproduct from sewage treatment plants operated by the Region, adds lime to it, heats it and turns it into clean, low-odour, nutrient-rich fertilizer that ends up on farmers' fields.

"It's a testament to the reliability and the success of the plant," Watt said of the award. "We're pretty happy about it. It's a big deal for us."

Farmers can spread sewage sludge — the end product of treating wastewater — on to fields. But Watt said many municipalities in Ontario struggle over what to do about that sludge during the winter months.

Walker's operation goes year-round. Last year, the company processed about 30,000 tonnes of the sludge, Watt said.

The fertilizer that's produced from the waste is sought-after by Niagara farmers because it's alkaline, whereas soils in the region tend to be acidic. By applying the fertilizer, farmers can help to balance the pH level of their soil, said Watt.

The water association chose Walker as the winner based on criteria such as environmental sustainability promoting the recycling of resources, being a consistent and cost-effective operation, addressing any provincial orders arising from complaints or violations, and public acceptance of the facility.

Walker, which also won the green business award from the Region in the annual Niagara Environmental Awards in 2012, recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of its Earth 1st program. That initiative, which pushes the boundaries of environmentally sustainable ideas and technologies, has spurred innovative changes such as developing technologies to recycle concrete and using sunlight to replace artificial light at facilities.



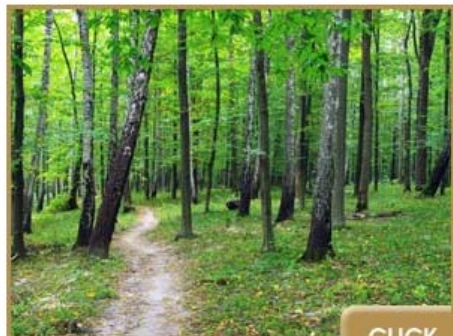
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Supplied photo
 Walker Environmental Group vice-president Mike Watt, left, and organics general manager Geoff Boyd, were on-hand in London, Ont. on April 7 to receive the Exemplary Biosolids Management Award in the full-scale operating project category from the Milton-based Water Environment Association president Christine Hill.

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