



Homeowner's Guide to Decommissioning a Private Septic System in the City of Ottawa

The OSSO is offering a voluntary certification program that will inspect, approve and document septic system decommissioning in the City of Ottawa. Proper decommissioning methods will help ensure that our health, safety and environment are protected.

Why decommission my septic tank?

Septic tanks are full of untreated wastewater. Wastewater is loaded with contaminants including bacteria, viruses, parasites and nitrates which can cause diseases or other health or environmental problems. If abandoned and not properly decommissioned, wastewater will eventually leak out, contaminating the soil and groundwater and polluting local watercourses.

Septic tanks that have not been properly taken out of service can also create a safety hazard. If an abandoned septic tank has not been filled in with soil, the lid or top of the tank may collapse or cave in. There have been serious injuries and even deaths caused by a fall into an abandoned septic tank when the lid collapsed.

By following this decommissioning and inspection process, homeowners will have the peace-of-mind that their family's health and safety is protected. Paperwork certifying the decommissioning will also provide value-added support during future real estate transactions.

How to decommission my septic tank?

To ensure your decommissioned septic tank does not create a hazard, do the following:

1. Complete and submit the *Septic System Decommissioning Form* (available at our office or online at www.rvca.ca/osso) along with payment to the OSSO at least five days prior to starting work.
2. Locate the septic tank and uncover the top of the tank (generally 12–24 inches below ground level). Do not enter the tank.
3. Have the septic tank wastewater (liquid and sludge) pumped out by a licensed septic hauler. It is important to pump the wastewater, as it contains bacteria and viruses that could make you or your family ill. Keep the pumping receipt as it acts as proof-of-pumping and will be required prior to OSSO inspection as part of the approval process.
4. Fill in the septic tank completely with sand or gravel and put the access lid(s) back in place, or demolish the tank and fill in with soil.
5. Request an OSSO inspection by calling the OSSO office at 613-692-3571 ext. 1123. If leaving a message, please include your name, the address of the decommissioning and the permit number from your *Septic System Decommissioning Form*.

6. An inspection will take place within 48 hours.
7. Once you receive paperwork approving the decommissioning of your septic tank, backfill the soil around the septic tank slightly higher than ground level to allow for settling.
8. Be sure to store your approved *Septic System Decommissioning Form* in a safe place. This documentation will be of value should you choose to sell your home in the future.

Contact Information:

Ottawa Septic System Office
c/o Rideau Valley Conservation Authority
Box 599, 3889 Rideau Valley Drive, Manotick ON K4M 1A5
613-692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504 ext. 1123

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