

OTTER LAKE NEWS

HRM Drops Height Extension Plan | New Contract With Mirror

Transfer Station Approved

HRM and Mirror have received approval from Nova Scotia Environment to convert part of the waste receiving building at Otter Lake into a transfer station. This allows the loading of business waste into larger trucks which will then transport it to landfills outside of HRM.

The change to the building is minimal. All residential waste will continue to be sorted in the Front End Processor and organic waste will be stabilized in the waste stabilization facility. Residential waste will continue to be disposed in the landfill after processing. The building has been divided to keep business and residential waste separate.

The CMC supports the establishment of the transfer station, because it will mean fewer trucks travelling on our highways, and provides a level playing field for the local small waste haulers to compete with the larger companies. The CMC also does not expect that there will be any negative environmental impacts from the transfer station operation.



Landfill Height Expansion Plan Abandoned

HRM has withdrawn its application to increase the height of the Otter Lake landfill by 15 metres, a plan which could have meant the landfill would be open into the next century.

In December, HRM notified Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) that it was withdrawing its application for a change in the height of the landfill. This means that the landfill height will go no higher. The current height conforms, and will continue to conform, with the maximum height of 122 metres above sea level, as per the 1997 landfill design approved by Nova Scotia Environment.

The Community Monitoring Committee advocated for no increase in height and no more cells beyond the original plan. It was clear that expansion was unnecessary because of the existing capacity at the landfill and significant reductions in the amount of waste entering the landfill.



View From The Trails

In 2013 and 2014, members of the Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization raised concerns about HRM's plan to increase the height of the landfill. In a letter to Mayor Savage and Council dated December 2014, members pointed out that views from The Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail were not considered when engineers investigated the visual impact of an increase in landfill height.

Fortunately, the existing views from the trail are no longer threatened by an increase to the height of the Otter Lake landfill.

Contacting Mirror

If you have any concerns regarding the Otter Lake landfill, you can contact Mirror Nova Scotia directly at 902-453-3490.

As well, the Community Monitoring Committee wanted Mirror Nova Scotia to be retained as the landfill operator for the entire duration of the landfill operation. This was because Mirror has been an excellent operator, and has ensured that impacts on the local community have been few and have been resolved quickly when they have occurred. The CMC wanted to ensure that community and environmental protection was maintained throughout the operating life of the landfill, and believes that Mirror is key to that happening.

Why did HRM abandon the height extension?

There are several factors that likely led to the decision to abandon the height application. For one, NSE provided a long list of requirements for HRM to meet, including public consultation with the local community. This likely caused uncertainty at HRM about whether the approval could be secured in time to design and build the next cell, or if the approval could be secured at all, given the likelihood of community pushback.

However another important factor was that the existing design capacity of the landfill is much greater than had been anticipated in 1997. Due to local land contours, the last 3 of the 9 planned cells will be built in a small swale, which means that the cells will be deeper than the first 6. The result is that the remaining capacity of the landfill is about twice as large as originally expected.

Finally, the fact is that the flow of garbage into the landfill has reduced in recent years, and is expected to continue to decrease. This is primarily because some of the waste from businesses is being transported to landfills outside of HRM where the cost of tipping the waste is lower. Also, the clear bag program has demonstrated promising early results of greater source separation.

Will the landfill close in 2023?

The combination of larger cells and reduced flows of waste into the landfill means that the landfill will not close in 2023 as many people expected. In fact, the landfill will likely remain operational for the next 30 years.

Although the landfill was originally planned to be operational for 25 years, based on the landfill capacity and projected tonnages, HRM has no legal obligation to close it after that period of time. In fact, the original 1997 approval by Nova



Results are Clear

Preliminary results of the new Clear Bag Collection Program have been very promising. It appears that there is a substantial decrease in the residential waste going to landfill, and an increase in diversion.

It is expected that this will result in a decrease in the amount of waste going to Otter Lake each year. HRM staff have said in the past that 50% of the waste going to landfill should have been going to recycling or composting instead.

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Scotia Environment for the Otter Lake landfill operation was that the landfill would operate until the 9 cells, as submitted at the time in the design documents, were full. It was not a particular date on the calendar. HRM intends to operate the landfill until it is full, as per the original operational plan.

HRM and Mirror Sign New Contract

HRM and Mirror Nova Scotia, the landfill operator, have negotiated a new contract, ratified at Council on December 8th, 2015. Details are confidential at this time, but more information is expected to be made public when the in-camera reports to Council are declassified.

In addition, HRM and Mirror will seek to add Mirror's name to Nova Scotia's industrial approval of the landfill. This will mean that HRM and Mirror will have joint responsibility for the operation.

The CMC will receive a copy of the contract for its records. HRM staff and Mirror appropriately provided CMC an opportunity to review and comment on a final draft of the contract before it was finalized.

Highway 103 Clean Up Tendered and Awarded

HRM has awarded a tender for a monthly cleanup, anticipated to be for 8 months of the year (excluding winter), of the area along Highway 103 in the vicinity of the landfill.

Litter along the highway has been a concern for years, something the CMC has raised many times with HRM. However, the highway is the responsibility of Nova Scotia Infrastructure and Renewal which has provided limited service for the cleanup.

Thanks to HRM for stepping up and taking action to keep the highway clean around the landfill.