



The Community Monitoring Committee's case against the removal of the FEP/WSF from the Otter Lake Landfill facility.

- **HRM staff have conducted a nine-year campaign to eliminate the Front End Processor (FEP) and Waste Stabilization Facility (WSF).**
- **The CMC will consult the Province which has steadfastly rejected past efforts to remove FEP/WSF.**

It appears once again that in its ongoing campaign to sideline or remove the front end processor and waste stabilization facility from the Otter Lake landfill, HRM staff continues to put monetary considerations ahead of the public good.

The Nova Scotia government enacted a landfill ban for all organic waste, beverage containers, and select plastics and much more in 1998. The commitments to the surrounding communities during the site selection for the Otter lake Landfill were based on these Solid Waste-Resource Management Regulations.

HRM council committed to the communities of Timberlea, Goodwood, Beechville, Lakeside, Lake of the Woods and Prospect adjacent to the Otter Lake facility a distinct urban landfill with the FEP/WSF stabilizing organics before being landfilled. This contractual commitment made in 1999 assured that only inert, residual waste or stabilized organics would be stored within the landfill.

In the past 20 years significant residential development has occurred adjacent to the Otter Lake landfill. This development, which includes some commercial ventures, occurred based on HRM's guarantees for the ongoing controls to limit organics, vectors and litter at the site.

In its previous attempts to remove this equipment the public has been overwhelmingly against such a move. This has not deterred HRM staff.

In 2019, after yet another attempt to remove FEP/WSF by landfill operator MIRROR, with HRM's consent, Scott Guthrie, Chair of CMC and HWRS board of directors, reminded Mayor Savage that in 2007 the Halifax Waste Resource Society "stood alongside HRM before the NS Supreme Court of Appeal. The HWRS won its case benefitting the citizens of Halifax.

“If we can possibly help it, let’s not ever meet in Court as adversaries which does not benefit our citizens.”

Many of the recent arguments for removal of this equipment by HRM staff are based on the present reduced volumes of garbage at the landfill at about 40,000 tons per year of residential waste. But HRM, which voted in late 2014 to allow the export of industrial and institutional (ICI) garbage outside the municipality, has the authority, at any time, to take back to Otter Lake the 100,000 tons per year of industrial and institutional waste.

In a report to CMC in 2018, HMJ Consulting Ltd., concluded:

- The Otter Lake operation can be made financially sustainable by stopping the export of ICI waste and ICI tipping fees to restore tonnage to Otter Lake at the original mutually agreeable tonnage.
- Allowing HRM’s proposal to remove FEP and WSF would undermine public confidence in provincial regulations and HRM’s commitments made to adjacent communities.
- HRM should begin to deal with the ICI-residential component effectively and enforce bans, to reduce organics going to landfills.
- The legal and social contract that HRM entered into with host communities must be upheld.

The report notes that should export of ICI waste continue then the lifespan of Otter Lake at 42,000 Tonnes/year of residential waste would be 60 years, assuming the continued operation of the FEP and WSF.

Assessing the risk to public health and the environment, the HMJ consultants found potential risk of noxious liquids, gases and solids from the facility.

“Closure of the FEP and WSF will increase risks to public health and the environment in any scenario of throughput rates, as they act to reduce undesirable effects compared to not having them, notwithstanding their level of significance.”

In its latest closure review to the city in 2020, Dillon consulting concedes that with the discontinuation of the FEP and WSF, residential waste collection vehicles would proceed directly along existing access roads to the tipping face with the following results:

- **Increased vehicular traffic**
- **Increased blowing litter**
- **Increased bird numbers at the site and more rodents**

Area residents will no doubt experience the results of a landfill site where human error and inattention can create problems such as has been seen in other parts of Nova Scotia and Canada.

We now have an operation that is the envy not only of many parts of our country, but also internationally as witnessed by the many delegations that have come to see how efficiently the Otter lake facility has operated. By removing this equipment there is no doubt that efficiency will be reduced and problems will ensue so eventually it will become just another problem-plagued dump.

The Otter Lake Landfill was sited based on a commitment for a unique landfill built and continuously operated at the highest level of modern controls. This included construction of the composite liner and the implementation of the FEP/WSF processes.

This is an urban landfill and as such needs greater environmental restrictions than rural landfills, mainly because of population density.

The Dillon study, based on only the current residential waste, is convinced that based on its analysis “there does not appear to be any increased risk to public health and the environment if the FEP/WSF operations are terminated.” The public may well ask why take the chance.

Consultants often conclude that no harm will come if only we take their advice and remove certain equipment. In this case the communities were assured the FEP/WSF would be part of a safe and efficient landfill operation. Even Dillon acknowledges that there have only been six public complaints over the last 25 years. That’s an enviable record and another example of how scrupulously this facility has been run.


In its presentation to CMC in January, 2021, HRM staff claims that continuing to operate a facility which provides no community benefit comes at the expense of programs such as funding parks, arenas, transit and other good things. Closing the FEP/WSF can be accomplished so that there is no impact to the local community “while benefiting HRM taxpayers and supporting the municipality in delivery of other programs that benefit our citizens.”

The fact is that this equipment was installed with the approval of the public at the time it was built. It has served the communities well and despite arguments that times and circumstances have changed it must remain intact to safeguard the integrity of this facility. To remove it would be taking a gamble that the overwhelming majority of those polled in 2013 rejected at a cost to HRM of \$450,000 in consulting fees.

“We have no guarantee that Chester or other jurisdictions will continue to take diversions of ICI waste from HRM,” says CMC director Maureen Yeadon. “If the volumes currently exported were reintroduced to our landfill without the protection of FEP/WSF, I believe our communities would rightfully be concerned about negative impacts...”

Otter Lake plays an integral part in HRM’s Integrated Waste/Resource Management Strategy (IWRMS) which is based on maximizing the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle). The IWRMS stated that the material had to meet several important conditions before it could be deemed acceptable for disposal at the Otter Lake Landfill facility. The material cannot include recyclable material, hazardous waste and organic material that has not been stabilized. The current way for Otter Lake to meet these objectives is to perform three distinct functions in three facility units: material sorting in the FEP, organic material stabilizing in the WSF and residual material disposal in the RDF.

Should this latest attempt to remove or change the current operational requirements end up in court this step may not be necessary because it appears the final arbiter, the parties in the Nova Scotia legislature, are prepared to oppose any attempt to alter the commitments made to the public in a resolution passed by the legislature in 2013.



Scott Guthrie, Chair, CMC

7 March 2021

Date

Appendix: CMC Environment Report on the proposed removal of FEP/WSF (Attachment)