

CMC Chair Briefing – Fire Debris and Otter Lake

The Community Monitoring Committee is looking into the implications of the wildfire cleanup in HRM that plans to send debris from the Tantallon and Hammonds Plains areas to the Otter Lake Waste Processing and Disposal Facility.

HRM, the owner of the landfill, and Mirror NS Ltd., the operator, have received provincial approval for a variance to permit the landfill to accept:

- **Construction and demolition debris from damaged homes and infrastructure**
- **Un-packaged food waste that cannot be processed through the Burnside Composting Facility**
- **Fire/ash affected soil without required laboratory confirmation to prove compliance with provincial Guidelines for Disposal of Contaminated Soils in Landfills**

HRM set up drop-off bins for food waste resulting from power loss and fire damage. The intent is to process as much as possible at the Burnside Composting Facility using its de-packaging equipment. However, the facility is limited in the amount it can process and the type of packaging it can handle. Glass containers, for instance, are out of bounds for the equipment.

Currently, full loads of construction and demolition debris are not accepted at Otter Lake. Only small quantities collected at residential curbsides are received. The CMC chair has been assured by **Andrew Philopoulos**, HRM's director of solid waste resources, that most of this debris from the recent wildfires in the municipality will go to



Firefighters from Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency fighting the wildfire in Tantallon
Photo Credit: Communications Nova Scotia

the Halifax construction and demolition debris disposal facilities and only a small amount will be sent to the Otter Lake landfill.

The variance request raises some concerns for the CMC that it will seek to address. The landfill now exceeds the 10% limit on organic waste as a percentage of total solid waste that was mandated by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Compliance with the organic limit was a condition for turning off the Front End Processor. It removed organics from the landfill waste stream for partial stabilization by the Waste Stabilization Facility, before being sent for burial.

The CMC is sympathetic to HRM's need to dispose of the wildfire debris. Our concerns are largely due to the fact that the actual amounts of construction-related rubbish and food waste that will be sent to the Otter Lake Landfill are not yet known, although HRM has described the amount of construction debris as small in relation to the quantity slated for HRM's construction-related disposal sites. Mr. Philopoulos has also stated that Solid Waste Resources believes the landfill "can accommodate the variance with no adverse impacts."

We plan to keep an eye on the situation.

Other Business

As of mid June, the CMC was awaiting more information from the Department of Environment and Climate Change on the status of two key provisions of its 2022 approval, which revised the terms of operation for the Otter Lake Landfill.

The terms provided for a Technical Steering Committee that would include CMC representation and a compostable waste target that "shall not exceed ten per cent of [the] total amount of municipal solid waste landfilled, by mass." The Technical Steering Committee has not been established and the compostable waste target has not been met. The CMC has requested that a Technical Steering Committee be struck and that the department immediately enforce its compostable waste target at the Otter Lake landfill or explain how the target will be met with current compliance initiatives in place.

Linda MacKay
CMC Chair