

August 04, 2023

VIA E-MAIL

Ms. Lora MacEachern
Deputy Minister
Department of Environment and Climate Change
1903 Barrington Place, Suite 2085
PO Box 442
Halifax, NS B3J 2P8

Dear Ms. MacEachern:

The Otter Lake Community Monitoring Committee, which I represent, oversees the Otter Lake Landfill operations in Timberlea. The CMC was established to ensure potential difficulties are resolved before they become major problems for residents and businesses in the immediate surrounding urban communities.

Following your department's Approval 2022-3051773-00 granted to the Halifax Regional Municipality and Mirror Nova Scotia Limited for changes to the landfill's operations, the CMC has found itself relegated to a reactive rather than a proactive position. Rather than being recognized as a valued community partner and part of the solution, the CMC is being treated as a peripheral entity with little to contribute.

We believe this situation runs counter to the department's own interests.

This summer, area wildfires and repeated flooding have raised CMC concerns about the effect that these crises will have on the landfill. While early assurances from HRM officials indicate the landfill will not be significantly impacted, the full effects are not known at this stage.

There is growing consensus that climate change has catapulted us into a new global era in which more of these dangerous and costly climate-driven events are likely to occur. The clean-ups will put added pressure on the Otter Lake Landfill.

They could also further complicate attempts to ensure that the landfill meets the organic waste target of 10% of the total amount of municipal solid waste, as set out in Section 16 of the Approval. We understand from HRM that far from immediate enforcement of the stated target, the department is prepared to go along with non-compliance until March 31, 2026,

the earliest date HRM is set to reach the 10% target. Is that indeed the department's position?

The potential for more floods and fires may not have been factored into the HRM plan. Should it be derailed by many more of these events, our communities could be faced with years of more non-compliance and delay.

Surely it is in the best interests of the department as well as HRM, the landfill owner and Mirror N.S., the operator, to have the voice of the most immediately affected communities at the table when strategy is being determined. By sidelining them in your exclusion of the CMC you are risking loss of public confidence in your stewardship.

Bringing CMC into these deliberations is already provided in Section 22 (c) of the Approval. Its administrator, Tanya F. Farrell, now the acting regional director (central), needs only to strike the Technical Steering Committee under that provision.

We think events this summer disprove the argument of Ms. A.J. Connell, an administrator with the department, with whom we met this spring, who indicated that there was no crisis to warrant the establishment of a Technical Steering Committee.

We don't understand the department's reluctance to establish this committee. As of this writing, we are still awaiting a reply to our letter of April 24, addressed to Andrew Murphy, the Executive Director, Sustainability and Applied Science, on this issue. We have been advised our letter has been twice forwarded internally for response.

We look forward, however, to a response from you on this matter. We remain hopeful that the department will see merit in keeping the communities immediately affected by the landfill informed in a proactive way through their voice, the CMC.

Regards,



Linda MacKay, Chair
Otter Lake Community Monitoring Committee

cc: Adrian Fuller, Executive Director, Compliance Division, Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change
Tanya Farrell, Acting Regional Director (Central), Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change
A.J. Connell, District Manager, Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change