



CMC Chair's September Update: A Technical Steering Committee Denied and Checking on Fire and Flood Debris

Technical Steering Committee

The Community Monitoring Committee (CMC) has been denied its request for a Technical Steering Committee (TSC) by the Deputy Minister of Environment and Climate Change, even though it was provided for in the department's 2022 approval that allows HRM to truck residential waste directly to burial without on-site sorting.

In an Aug. 18 letter, Deputy Minister Lora MacEachern told us: "The current situation at this facility does not warrant the creation of such a committee." Its purpose, Ms. MacEachern stated is "to ensure proper evaluation and input, should new technologies be employed, or significant operational changes be changed at the facility." No such restriction is cited in the department's approval document.

The landfill has yet to meet the 10 per cent organic waste target – the percentage of total municipal solid waste landfilled by mass – as set out in the approval, and HRM's plan may not reach that goal until March 31, 2026. This revelation has caused CMC unease that participation in a TSC to review landfill operations and recommend changes to the monitoring program could have alleviated.

Concerning the compliance plan, Ms. MacEachern's letter stated, "the timelines and maximum percentages proposed are currently under review by our Department," raising uncertainty about the status of the HRM plan recently presented to the CMC. She added, "It is important that we continue to work with stakeholders to ensure the schedule is reasonable, achievable and supports the successful implementation of the 10 per cent target." However, by shutting out the CMC in these deliberations, the suggestion is that CMC is no longer considered a stakeholder.

CMC's Aug. 4 letter to Ms. MacEachern, the Aug. 18 response, and a presentation on compliance made to the CMC by Andrew Philopoulos, HRM's Director of Solid Waste Resources, are posted on our website: www.otterlakecmc.ca.



Drop-off bins at Otter Lake Landfill are receiving garbage, furniture, construction, and demolition (C&D) materials from HRM residents dealing with recent fire and flood damage. All the refuse collected in these bins is sent to the West Hants Landfill. HRM has directed residents to take C&D waste either to its Otter Lake collection bins or to its C&D sites at 16 Mills Drive, Goodwood, or 188 Ross Road, Westphal. (Photos/Jason Timms)

Status of Fire and Flood Debris

CMC's Environmental Consultant Scott Morash confirmed with Otter Lake Landfill staff in August that no appreciable increase in organic or compostable waste has been noted at the tip face due to HRM's recent wildfire and flooding incidents.

Mr. Morash visited the landfill in early August after receiving similar assurances from Andrew Philopoulos, HRM's Director of Solid Waste Resources, and Steve Copp, Mirror NS's Otter Lake Landfill Manager, in late July.

There was initial concern that debris from the cleanups, principally higher amounts of spoiled food and other organic matter, could create a problem for area residents near the landfill. Mr. Philopoulos and Mr. Copp were confident that the amount of landfill-destined organics would remain low because the recent emergencies had been short-lived and had been accompanied by only minor power outages.

Results from a July 31 internal audit showed a reduction in organic matter being buried at the site. However, Mr. Morash

noted it was "difficult to determine a volume of organics or other compostables as the load is dumped and almost immediately compacted." The observation raises questions about the audit's accuracy.

This audit was separate from the quarterly performance audits, in which the landfill has been found slightly over the 10 per cent target set by the Department of Environment and Climate Change as part of its conditional 2022 approval that shut down the front-end processor and waste stabilization facility and allowed garbage to go straight to burial.

CMC's consultant also conducted a recent litter survey from Halifax to Exit #3 along Highway 103 in which he spotted little discarded waste. The finding suggests that Mirror NS's monthly litter removal along that section of highway is currently effective.

Linda MacKay
CMC Chair