



CMC Chair Briefing: New Cell at Otter Lake Landfill To Go Into Service by Late Fall

A new cell, 7B, is being prepared at the Otter Lake Landfill Facility to accept Halifax Regional Municipality’s (HRM’s) residential waste by late fall, this year. This means 7A, the current active cell, is coming to the end of its life. The facility has a nine-cell capacity.

The Community Monitoring Committee’s (CMC’s) Environmental Consultant Scott Morash visited the site recently while preparations of cell 7B were ongoing.

He found the base liner system for the new cell in place and work proceeding on tying the liner of 7B into the liners of the two adjacent cells, an undertaking that **Steve Copp**, Otter Lake’s landfill manager, explained involves “exposing the bottom edge of waste in Cell 7A.”



View from the top of 7B, the new cell. The base liner is shown in place, sloping to the surface where it is keyed into the ground. Photo: Scott Morash

During the procedure, uncovered areas were closed daily, but it did run some risk of producing odour. “We have completed this task numerous times without incident but whenever we dig into in-place trash there is a potential for a gas release,” said Mr. Copp. Mr. Morash, however, found no excessive garbage odour at the site and none was detected in the Timberlea area or at the Otter Lake facility’s offices.

Very Close to Target

The latest Nova Scotia Department of Environment & Climate Change-endorsed compliance plan calls for Otter Lake Landfill to accept no more than **10%** of compostable solid waste by mass as of March 27, 2026, with interim targets set at **11.61%** for March 31, 2024, and **10.81%** for March 31, 2025.

The plan was developed after the department’s 2023 conditional approval of the application by HRM, the landfill owner, and Mirror Nova Scotia Ltd., the operator, to shut down the waste stabilization facility along with the front-end processor that pre-sorted residential waste to remove compostables and other materials before burial. CMC opposed the application because it was seen as a violation of its legal agreement with HRM, a position overwhelmingly backed by the public in a 2021 HRM survey, which rejected the shutdown.

% Compostable Waste Comparison			
Area and Description	2022/23 Baseline	2023/24 Year 2	Trend
1 - Halifax	15.15%	10.90%	↓
2 - Dartmouth	14.50%	11.23%	↓
3 - Bedford/Hammonds Plains	14.59%	14.33%	→
4 - Timberlea/Prospect/SMB/Herring Cove	9.30%	14.98%	↑
5 - Sackville/Beaver Bank/Fall River/Waverley	11.70%	9.04%	↓
6 - Cole Harbour/Eastern Passage/Cow Bay	9.42%	9.03%	↓
7 - Porters Lake/Preston/Lake Echo	8.90%	6.14%	↓
8 - Eastern Shore/Musquodoboit Valley*	10.55%	13.09%	↑
Condominiums (Condos)	13.75%	22.72%	↑
Total Weighted % Compostable	12.41%	11.64%	↓

● Currently Not Meeting Interim Target (11.61%)
 ● Meeting Year 1 Interim Target (11.61%)
 ● Meeting Final Target (10%)

Courtesy, Solid Waste Resources, HRM

By this year’s target date, the Otter Lake facility had fallen short of the March goal by **.03%**, making HRM confident that the **10%** goal can be achieved by the March 31, 2026 deadline.

Quality Performance Audits to determine the Otter Lake facility’s compliance began in May 2022, with the most recent audit completed in May this year. CMC’s Environmental Consultant attended 90% of the audits, which show data collected on a variety of waste types sent to the Otter Lake facility from nine HRM community areas. Weighted averages are calculated for the different types of debris collected by area as a percentage of the total waste sent to Otter Lake.

The quarterly audits are posted on the Otter Lake Community Monitoring website.

New HRM C&D Policy Coming

The CMC has provided input, as requested by HRM’s Director of Solid Waste Resources, on a policy being developed for emergency acceptance of construction and demolition debris (C&D) at the Otter Lake landfill. The policy is meant to deal with the rising frequency of extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods and wildfires.

The CMC is satisfied HRM is on the same page in wishing to ensure as little C&D as possible enters the Otter Lake facility and only on an emergency basis, as happened during the huge wildfire clean-up last summer, when no other disposal option was feasible.

C&D refers to drywall, plaster, cellulose, fiberglass, fibres, gyproc, lumber, wood and asphalt shingles. HRM has By-Law L-200 (2021) Respecting Licensing of C&D Recycling and Disposal Operations to minimize the amount of C&D going into the landfill and to maximize recycling of this material. In July 2023, the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change allowed the Otter Lake landfill to accept C&D debris as part of the facility’s current environmental approval, but HRM does not generally permit this activity.

Reg Rankin
CMC Chair