

HRM RESPONSES TO TOWN HALL MEETING QUESTIONS - PART 1

This document reflects answers to the key questions raised by the residents of Beechville, Lakeside, Timberlea and Prospect Road communities at the Town Hall events held September 18 & 19, 2013.

In an effort to ensure responses are provided in a timely manner, the answers in this document address the most common topics, issues and concerns, identified on the Post-it notes by residents during the Town Hall meetings. This document will be expanded as additional questions are answered.

1. WHY ARE YOU CHANGING A SYSTEM THAT WORKS?

Our ultimate goal here is to continue protecting the environment and the community. This will drive all decisions on how we go about improving our solid waste management system.

The current system isn't as efficient or cost effective as it should be. And we need to identify and adopt better ways of investing taxpayers' dollars to achieve our goal of upholding, and ideally enhancing, environmental and community protections.

2. WHY IS HRM BREAKING ITS AGREEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY?

The community agreement was created to clearly reflect our collective commitment to protect the community and the environment. These are outcomes, not processes, which are still the priority for everyone. Our commitment to these outcomes remains unchanged.

We know that the solid waste management system isn't as efficient or cost-effective as it should be. And we need to consider changes to improve the system including, but not limited to, changes at Otter Lake.

We've learned that the processing of waste through the Front End Processor (FEP) and Waste Stabilization Facility (WSF) at Otter Lake doesn't contribute to effective waste management and it does not safeguard environmental and community protection. This protection comes from advancements in four areas:

- Environmental regulations*
- Technology – most notably, improvements to landfill liners*
- Operations at the landfill*

- *Behaviour by residents and businesses – specifically, source separation at the curb*

With this in mind, we must give due consideration to any option that can contribute significantly to improving the system.

3. IF OPERATIONS WERE TO CHANGE, OR STOP, AT OTTER LAKE WOULDN'T THIS COST JOBS?

We recognize any potential change in operations at the Front End Processor (FEP) and Waste Stabilization Facility (WSF) has a real impact on the livelihoods of those working at these facilities.

Yes, if the FEP and WSF were to be closed this would impact jobs. Implementing this option this could only be done as part of a revised operations plan – a plan that would require proper staffing.

One option presented in the Stantec report would see the Waste Stabilization Facility re-purposed into a traditional composting plant for organics. Other considerations include converting the Otter Lake facility into a regional waste resource campus. These types of operational changes at the landfill would result in the creation of some new, different jobs. However, at this stage, it's too early to determine the overall impact on jobs.

4. IF YOU INCREASE THE HEIGHT OF THE CELLS, WON'T I BE ABLE TO SEE THE LANDFILL FROM MY BACKYARD?

To ensure that increasing the height of the cells doesn't mean more people will see the landfill, we completed what's called a 'balloon test'. This involved anchoring six very large balloons on the landfill so that they were floating 15 meters above the current height of the cells. Then we drove around and looked at the landfill from many locations in community neighbourhoods – to confirm where we might be able to see the balloons. Results confirmed that those who can't see the landfill now, won't see the landfill if the cell heights were increased by 15 meters. However, raising the height of the landfill does significantly reduce costs down the road and enables us to delay siting a new landfill for a much longer time.

5. IF YOU SHUT DOWN THE FRONT END PROCESSOR (FEP) AND WASTE STABILIZATION FACILITY (WSF), AREN'T I GOING TO NOTICE A LOT OF ISSUES WITH ODOUR?

We've learned that shutting down the Front End Processor (FEP) and Waste Stabilization Facility (WSF) does not create issues with odour. For eight months in 2010, operations ceased at the FEP and WSF while the roof was being



replaced. During that time, from May to December, there were no issues with birds and there were no complaints about odour.

6. IF THE PROVINCE SAYS THAT IT WON'T APPROVE ANY CHANGES AT OTTER LAKE UNTIL THE END OF THE CONTRACT WHY ARE YOU EVEN GOING THROUGH THIS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE?

Regional Council has authority over the solid waste management system and has asked that staff complete a thorough review of the Solid Waste Resources Strategy. This includes seeking expert advice about options to improve the system, discussing these options with residents, and presenting recommendations to Council.

No recommendations have been put forward by staff and no decisions have yet been made by Council.

The community engagement process is about helping residents gain a clear understanding of the information available and getting their feedback about the entire system – including, but not limited to, operations at Otter Lake. We want to hear about what's working, what isn't, and how HRM can deliver the best system possible for many years to come.

7. SO IF THE FRONT END PROCESSOR (FEP) AND WASTE STABILIZATION FACILITY (WSF) WERE TO BE SHUT DOWN, WOULDN'T WE JUST HAVE ANOTHER SACKVILLE LANDFILL ISSUE ON OUR HANDS?

In the years since Sackville landfill was operational, much has changed. There are four major reasons why Otter Lake cannot become another Sackville landfill:

- 1. Enhanced environmental regulations*
- 2. Advances in technology – most notably, improvements to landfill liners*
- 3. Improvements in operations at the landfill*
- 4. Changes in citizen behaviour has resulted in better source separation*

8. RATHER THAN EXTEND THE LIFE OF THIS LANDFILL, WHY DON'T YOU JUST BUILD ANOTHER ONE SOMEWHERE ELSE?

It took more than a decade to site the Otter Lake landfill which comprises more than 800 hectares. Extending the life of the existing site has far less environmental and financial impact than creating an entirely new landfill.



9. HOW WILL PROPERTY VALUES OF HOMES NEAR THE LANDFILL BE AFFECTED?

We can't address all the many factors that affect property value, but we do understand that how we operate the landfill is important to current and prospective residents in the community.

Our commitment to protecting the environment and community above all else remains unchanged and will stay that way. Moving forward, the Otter Lake landfill will be operated in a manner that continues to maintain, or enhance, protections.