

*Orono Weekly Times*

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## **A working paper**

With the summer holidays over, it's time once again to put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, and come up with an article to fill this spot.

As stated in our last editorial prior to the two week shut down, on July 23rd, we went to Nova Scotia to tour the Otter Lake Landfill site just outside of Halifax. The purpose of the tour was to find out what really happens at this landfill site, after some Durham Regional councillors gave conflicting reports following their trip to the landfill site in June.

Contrary to what some Regional Councillors reported, there was absolutely no odour emanating from the landfill site. Also, there are more sea gulls on any given day in Orono than were evident at the landfill site. Granted there were portions of the waste processing operation that did smell, such as the section where all the garbage bags are broken prior to having their contents manually sorted in the front-end processing stage. Part of the front-end processing operation at the Otter Lake Landfill site includes opening all the incoming garbage bags so all organics and recyclables can be removed from the waste stream prior to land filling. The waste is put on a conveyor belt and recyclables and organics are removed by hand. What is left on the conveyor belt after sorting is basically dirty plastics and paper which includes a fair number of Tim Horton's coffee cups. This material is then fed through a bio stabilizer unit to speed the decomposition of biodegradable organics. What comes out of this unit looks similar to the contents of a vacuum cleaner bag, dust with little bits of glass and metal. It is this material that is put into the landfill.

According to the officials at Otter Lake, the methane gas emanating from their old landfill which has been closed for 10 years, far exceeds the methane released from their new stabilized landfill. The Otter Lake Landfill site which opened in 1999 consists of nine cells. Cells one, two and three are full, and cell four which they are currently working on is half full. According to the landfill official, cell one and two no longer emit methane gas. Clarington Councillor Charlie Trim scoffed at the fact that the methane gas collected at the Otter Lake facility is not harnessed to create energy. According to officials at the Landfill, there is not enough methane created at the landfill to turn into energy.

The dump tour was a very worthwhile experience and well worth the \$50 cost.

The other official stop I made on this trip was to Kempville, in the Annapolis Valley Region of Nova Scotia. There I learned that Nova Scotia has a surplus of landfill capacity. Also the Valley Region had implemented a clear bag program for waste collection in April of this year, and while it was still too early to have any concrete figures on how the program has increased waste diversion, the manager of waste for the Region said there is a noticeable increase in recyclables, and a decrease in garbage. As several other regions in the Province were already using the clear bag program, the Valley Region did not run a pilot program prior to implementing the initiative. They had enough evidence from the other Regions to know it would work.

Halifax region council just voted against implementing a clear bag program in their Region at this time. The Province is holding municipal elections in October.

Though the Nova Scotia waste management story is quite interesting, it is fundamentally different from our experience because the Province has taken the lead and set the direction for waste management. In fact, waste management is not seen as a garbage issue in Nova Scotia. It is treated as a resource management opportunity. The government of Nova Scotia has implemented a recycling strategy, which includes banning a number of items such as glass, metals, and recyclable plastics from landfill. They have also set up a fund to assist with recycling initiatives within their Regions.

The government of Ontario has shown no leadership in waste management in the province other than putting a deposit return system on alcohol containers. The regions and municipalities can do a lot on their own to decrease their waste stream, but without provincial initiatives these strategies will always fall short. It's high time the Province of Ontario stepped up to the plate and played an active role in managing the resources that are set out on the curb weekly in the municipalities and regions that make up this province. waste management. If governments in other "have-not" provinces can do it, there's no reason it can't be done in Ontario.