

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Nova Scotia landfill site a turn-off for Trim

Councillor Charlie Trim said he was not impressed with the Otter Lake Stabilized Landfill site on the outskirts of Halifax, Nova Scotia. "I certainly would not support stabilized landfill if it's like Otter Lake," he said at Monday night's council meeting.

Trim and Councillor Mary Novak joined eight fellow Regional Councillors and five senior staff members on a tour of the Halifax landfill site and two composting facilities, last weekend. The purpose of the tour was to educate Regional Council and staff in alternative residual waste and composting methods.

Stabilized landfill is a three stage process, where waste is mechanically and manually sorted to remove recyclables, hazardous materials and organics. Bio-stabilization is used in stage two to decompose biodegradable organics, and in stage three, inert/stabilized residuals are transferred to the onsite fill.

In 1999, the Region of Durham passed a resolution banning any new landfill sites in the Region Durham Region has since partnered with York Region to establish an energy from waste facility to deal with their residual waste. They are currently involved in the environmental assessment phase of the proposed EFW for which a site in Courtice is being recommended.

This was Trim's second visit to the Otter Lake site in two years. Due to construction, visitors on this trip were not allowed to see the actual site where the garbage is dumped, according to Trim. "We didn't see the cells where they put the garbage," Trim stated.

Trim reported that in the mid 1990's, the city of Halifax purchased 1,000 acres of property for the land-fill. The site, which opened to full operation in 1999, currently uses 200 acres and employs about 100 people. Of the nine cells created for landfill in the facility, cell number four is now being used. The facility cost \$252 million to construct, in 1999 dollars, according to Trim, and cost \$13 million to operate.

Methane gas collected in the landfill is released into the atmosphere by hand pressure valves, Trim reported.

A Halifax resident will pay an average of \$180 on their property tax bill for garbage pick-up, according to Trim. Region of Durham tax payers paid \$140 to \$150 on their 2007 property tax bill for waste management.

When Trim asked an operator at the Miller Waste facility in Halifax to open up three bags of garbage that were just brought into the facility from the curbside, two of the three bags could have been diverted to the recycling stream, Trim reported. "Emphasis for diversion starts in each individual home," Trim said.

Some of the waste regions in Nova Scotia are using the clear plastic bags along with a dark bag for personal things, like the Region of Durham is proposing, Trim reported. Some of the Nova Scotia regions are having trouble with the clear bag program, and some places are doing exceptionally well, according to Trim.

Councillor Novak said she didn't want to be all negative about the weekend trip, as there were some good things being done in Nova Scotia. A good example, according to Novak, was the ten cent deposit charged on all beverage containers except milk containers. Five cents is reimbursed when the beverage container is returned to the store. This deposit system helps pay for the Province's recycling initiatives.

Nova Scotia is being recognized as a national and international leader in waste management strategies.