

Item 10.3.1

Protecting Our Freshwater Resources

Update to ESSC

A Thousand Lakes

August 6, 2025

Today's Presentation

- Who we are
- Recap of presentation of March 6, 2025
- Letter to Minister Halman
- Framework for Integrated Watersheds Management

A Thousand Lakes

- Volunteer collective of natural scientists and policy professionals providing advice to decision makers (all levels) on freshwater issues.
- Independent successor to the Regional Watersheds Advisory Group
 - Accept no donations, except of expert volunteer time
 - No financial or administrative support from government or private sector
- Composed of:
 - Dr. Martin Willison
 - Dr. Linda Campbell
 - Dr. David Patriquin
 - Bob Rutherford
 - Céo Gaudet
 - Walter Regan

Key Points of March 6 Presentation

- Our lakes and rivers are extremely valuable.
- Problems in our lakes and rivers are getting worse.
 - Lake ecosystems tend to hold on to nutrients they receive
 - Can lead to ecological tipping points (unpredictable)
 - Lakes become messy and smelly - unusable for recreation
- Strong action is necessary and justified
 - Need to stop polluted stormwater entering our watersheds
 - Benefits of action exceed the costs of inaction, particularly in the Dartmouth Lakes.
- We are out of time

Letter to Minister Halman

- Strong suggestion from councillors to take our message to the province.
- Halman letter:
 - Engineering solutions are needed to keep polluted stormwater out of our waterways
 - Other system players (HRM, Halifax Water, UARB) have taken the position that they cannot implement solutions unless they are required to by provincial regulations.
 - Suggest the Minister bring together the Mayor and the heads of HW and UARB to find solutions.

Initial Meeting w/Provincial Environment Staff

- Minister Halman's reply suggested we meet with provincial environmental engineering staff.
 - Initial meeting in late July
 - Staff very open to discussing issues and potential solutions with us.
- We look forward to future discussions in the Fall.
- Hopeful that the process can lead to positive results.

Framework for Integrated Watersheds Management

- Passed unanimously by this committee on August 1, 2024
- Two-year process to develop a watershed management plan
 - First meeting in June 2025
 - Second meeting August 20, 2025
- Steering ctee composed of local residents
 - Led by a facilitator
 - Consensus decision making
- Significant investment of time, effort, money and citizen goodwill
 - **What would success look like?**
 - **What would failure look like?**

Ingredients for Success

- Address real and observable problems (weeds, algae, bacteria, salt).
 - NOT “trophic level” or other abstract indicators
 - Clear goals and metrics
- Explore engineering solutions
 - Call in experts (if necessary) and use their powers to contract engineering studies (if necessary)
 - City has significant capacity in this regard
- Distinguish between short- and long-term actions
- Not limited to just what the municipality can do
 - Identify potential partners and sources of financing

Goals and Metrics

- Goals and metrics need to be **driven by the problem statement**.
- The **goal** of the process should be to **generate options to improve lake health by addressing root problems**.
- Need **clear metrics for improvement**, e.g.:
 - Reduction in weed growth
 - Fewer beach days closed due to blue-green algae

Separate Short and Long Term Actions

- Classify actions as short or long term
 - Short term: Worth doing and can be done quickly,
 - Within municipal jurisdiction
 - Environment staff probably already have a very good idea about what these actions are (e.g., on municipal property)
 - Should not take long to decide
 - Long term: What really needs to be done to restore the lakes to good health.
 - Engineering solutions
 - Irrespective of jurisdictional or financial considerations

Costed Options

- Emerge from the process with a set of **costed options** with **varying levels of ambition** to be presented to Council.
- Including those that could require inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

Consequences of Success

- Emerge with new knowledge and ideas about how to improve lake health.
- A successful process will help energize the community and decision makers to undertake more ambitious actions
- Set the standard for other watersheds

Recipe for Failure

- Restrict the mandate to actions that can be done cheaply, easily, and within municipal jurisdiction.
 - These are already known by municipal staff
 - No added value from the process
 - Staff could come forward to Council now with these options
- Set the goal as managing expectations about what is achievable.
 - Convince the community to just “Live with it”
 - Use the process to justify inaction

Consequences of Failure

- No new knowledge
- Waste of time, money, effort and volunteer goodwill
- Set a poor example for other watersheds.
 - Pilot could fail, leaving other watersheds in limbo.

Suggested Role for ESSC

- Unanimously approved by this committee on August 1, 2024
 - High expectations, much optimism about the potential for success
 - Project “owner” at the political level
- (ESSC) Responsible to Regional Council and the public for the success of the Framework
- Suggestion:
 - Invite staff to ESSC to report regularly on progress (e.g., every four or six months)
 - Opportunity for course correction (if necessary)
 - Insist on a meaningful process