

Amanda R. Dunfield



May 10, 2024

West Hants Regional Municipality
ATTN. WHRM Council
76 Morison Drive
Windsor, NS
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I am writing to express my concerns with the Emergency Plan for the Windsor Flood Zone discussed April 24, 2024 by the Committee of the Whole. While I am very appreciative of Councillors Ivey and Murley for understanding for the *absolute need for an emergency response plan* for the impacted areas and bringing the matter forward again, I believe many would agree it would have been prudent to speak with property owners before tabling a report. I am also appreciative of Peter Moore for undertaking the task of submitting his suggestions for his property; I fully understand and share in his anxiety. I understand and agree with Director Richard's comment (approx. 32:30 into the meeting) "EVERY ACTION HAS A REACTION". Berming will undoubtedly impact others. As much as my family needs to see this nightmare end, I cannot in good faith blindly support berm installation, particularly if it means moving the problem along to others in the community. I care about "the others", even those that have made it abundantly clear to me they have little to no concern for my family or anyone else's. This is a community wide problem; we need community wide solutions.

I would like to thank Councilor Smith for tabling his questions with respect to berm construction and for pointing out more detailed engineering may be an appropriate consideration, as well as Director Richard for sharing his thoughts on the need for proper design and a better breadth of knowledge of the potential repercussions of such an undertaking. *We need this to be right*. After nearly three years, right enough doesn't cut it anymore.

As many of you may now be aware, it sounds as if not all in our community saw berms as the solution. Berming can't be successful if it's not a community endeavor. *We don't need another poorly planned and executed emergency response plan failure. What we need is for WHRM to start fulfilling their end of the bargain*. We need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt our

families and our properties will be kept safe from WHRM's combined sewer overflows on go forward basis, until such time the municipal owned infrastructure which is responsible for controlling the sewer and stormwater in the street is properly sized and appropriately constructed. *"This is not a failure of the properties."*

1. *Curbside berms and driveway gates are unlikely to be the solution if gate installation is homeowner driven.*

Case in point – I am the only resident on my street who has sandbags. I can and do sandbag the end of my driveway however, if my neighbors don't follow suit, it makes no difference. The combined sewer overflow simply flows through their properties into mine. In fact, I have been the only homeowner either at home and/or awake during the July 2021, July 2023 floods and during most daytime -weekday events, with an ability to respond immediately as the CSOs began.

To be abundantly clear – there have been more than two documented combined sewer overflows here since July 2021, despite Director Richard's repeated misrepresentations. In fact, WHRM employees have witnessed some of these occurring while sitting in their vehicles, 'monitoring' the situation. *Just watching.* Watching us doing the things each household must do to attempt to protect family and property from *your* product. No offers of help. No streets closed, despite requests to do so. *Just watching.*

2. *Driveway gates stored at the community centre will not be the solution.*

- a) Are any council members or staff familiar with how these events unfold here and how quickly they occur? To shed some light – we have approximately 6 mins on average from the time the manhole cover at the intersection of Stannus and Thomas begins air letting before a combined sewer overflow is in progress.
- b) Is anyone familiar with how long it takes to evacuate pets & children? Move vehicles to higher ground? Make calls to the Public Works Emergency Line, or god forbid the municipal office (as that can take significantly longer) to advise of a CSO in progress and request staff be mobilized? It takes some time and historically speaking, brings no one to assist.
- c) How long does it take to run and connect multiple hoses? I have **5 fixed sump pumps** mounted at various heights throughout my basement to deal with CSOs. All have accessory hoses – approx. **200ft** in total - which must for obvious reasons be routed outside (versus into the sewer). This takes time.

- d) I have a **3" trash pump**, a **2" trash pump**, and approximately **300 ft** of fire hose – all to deal with CSOs. Should I need more pumping power, these must be set up. This takes time.
- e) Should the power be out, one of my **two back up power sources** must be tied in and started. This takes time. Luckily my largest capacity sump pump has a battery back up, sometimes this will buy me some time. At approx. \$1500 a pop there will only be the one battery back up as other than in CSO events, my home only requires one sump pump, which rarely needs to run under normal conditions. As it should.
- f) Does anyone know how long it takes for a WHRM employee to arrive on an **EMERGENCY** basis? Let me tell you: the best response time to the waterfront pump was **45 minutes**. But we only have an average of **6 mins before the combined sewer is effectively geysering from the storm drains and combined sewer overflow - that is not our material - is flowing into our driveways, flooding our properties with sewage and stormwater**. Not 'rainwater' as Director Richard would like to lead people to believe, stormwater. There is a difference.

Now, if I'm lucky and the timing works out, I don't have to do these activities with a child in tow, trying to keep her safe as I work. In flood conditions. More specifically a combined **SEWER overflow**. But hey, that's why we keep life jackets on our coat rack, instead of coats like a normal family... because sometimes that material is a few inches deep, other times its feet deep.

With a newfound understanding of how these events unfold, *does it seem reasonable to store driveway barricades at the community center or possibly even have homeowners responsible for installing them?* Are we expected to go to the community center and pick them up during events or will staff be delivering them to us? If delivered, will it be like Greco? 30 mins or it's free? Or will it be like the response to the pump at the waterfront? They'll be there when they get there, if at all. How many of these barricades will need to be delivered? One, two, three.... forty-one? That's going to take some time. I hope I'm not home forty-one on the list.

With respect to water filled barricades; how long do these take to fill? Do we have time for this before combined sewer overflow has already potentially begun flooding our property? What happens if a combined sewer overflow is a winter event and water has been turned off to hose bibs and hoses are in storage?

3. *On demand sucker trucks are not a solution.*

Quite clearly not doable, as anyone who has been following the situation closely and attending or watching all the meetings would have known, on the simple basis of past discussions. I'm unsure why this was even a suggestion.

4. *Trash pumps and generators may be helpful for some.*

This is a fabulous suggestion for those that haven't already incurred the expense of purchasing an abundance of gear to pump away municipal product that flows into their properties and has been very clearly demonstrated to be not their responsibility to control at street level. Perhaps reimbursement could be considered for those of us that had to purchase enough CSO pumping gear to open a small rental shop, because the situation we did not create necessitated us doing so.

Ultimately, it's not my product. It's not my responsibility. I should not have to be the person pumping it away. I should not have to set up driveway barricades. I should not have to pay insurance deductibles - assuming of course insurance can even be secured anymore. Our insurance should not even be involved – after all, WHRM is responsible for controlling stormwater and sewer in the street. WHRM should be covering the costs of clean-ups and repairs. I should not have to pay for hotels when my home is uninhabitable because of CSOs. I should not have to plan my life or my child's life around the weather because the infrastructure isn't doing the job it is supposed to do. My child should not have to be withdrawn from her activities because her mother is too busy dealing with the fallout of WHRM's combined sewer overflows. There should be no property taxes levied against my impacted property retroactively to July 2021 and until such time the issues are fully rectified. I should not be paying for sewer. I should have been provided with a seacan to accommodate the loss of my basement and outbuilding as a safe space. I understand I am not alone in the need to abandon these portions of my property; perhaps should others desire one, they could be offered the same. Should they not have space in their yard for one, that's ok. Find a place for them. Perhaps in the parking lot at the Hants Aquatic Centre, centrally located in the Windsor Flood Zone.

To be abundantly clear, I'm guessing there likely isn't a single impacted homeowner truly excited about the thoughts of buy outs and moving given the state of the economy and crisis in housing availability and cost. But what are the *real* options being offered at this point? How much longer should we have to wait? How many more CSOs will that translate to? At what point will families break? Under the circumstances, it appears community members have been exceedingly patient – begging for help, begging for solutions. Waiting. Waiting. Still waiting.... The last municipal hosted Windsor Floodzone community meeting was on or about November 29, 2023. Since that time, some things have happened, a lot has not happened and yet nobody seems overly concerned with updating the people. It does seem like that's the least that could be done. Under the circumstances.

Many of these people are proud to call Windsor home. Some are not. Make us all proud. Give us a reason to want to stay. Give our children a reason to want to grow into adults in this town. We do not need banners, flowerpots and a catchy slogan. *We **need essential basic infrastructure upgrades** that should have been planned and, in the works, years before today. We deserve better. We deserve transparency and accountability, not the lies and the lip service we've been fed.*

We don't need another poorly planned and executed emergency response plan failure. We need a thoughtful and effective emergency response plan. Initial discussions on an emergency response plan occurred in 2021; the community brought the issue back in December 2023. There has been more than adequate time for staff to put one together. This is their responsibility. Our taxes pay their salaries. If they are not capable of doing the jobs they were hired to do, it may be time to move them along. Afterall a municipality is effectively a business, not a friendship club. *We need WHRM to start fulfilling their end of the bargain. We need an expedient permanent solution and unwavering demonstrated commitment to make this infrastructure issue the priority in WHRM. This is not a failure of the properties.*

I look forward to your prompt attention to this matter.

Amanda Dunfield

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Dunfield', with a stylized flourish at the end.