



October 29, 2019

Hon. Karen Ebel
Hon. John O'Connor
Hon. Megan Murray
Hon. David Watters
Legislative Office Building
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

*Re: Committee to Study Recycling Streams and Solid Waste Management in
New Hampshire*

Dear Reps. Ebel, O'Connor, and Murray and Sen. Watters:

Thank you for your work on this committee. As you have come to appreciate, this is an extremely complicated area with many intertwined issues.

You have heard from a number of municipal representatives during the course of your study, and I have nothing specific to add to their comments. I will only emphasize a few of the points they have made.

Most municipalities work hard to reduce solid waste disposal in landfills and incinerators, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it reduces municipal costs. Municipal governments do not need much more in the way of incentives, but what they do need are technical assistance for their employees and education for their residents.

Those municipalities that are members of the Northeast Resource Recovery Association do get valuable assistance from that organization, but it can only do so much, and not all municipalities are members. As was discussed during the committee meetings, there previously was an office at DES that provided this kind of assistance to municipalities, but it was de-funded some time ago. Reinstating it would be a big step forward.

Other matters of interest to municipalities include:

- *Landfill capacity.* Although we recognize that landfilling is a last resort, it must remain an option for at least the foreseeable future. It is important to ensure sufficient landfill capacity while doing everything possible to avoid preempting local land use regulation.
- *Materials recovery facilities.* As was explained during the meetings, New Hampshire does not have any materials recovery facilities (MRFs) for the sorting and distribution of

recyclable materials. Locating one or more MRFs in New Hampshire would help to reduce trucking costs.

- *Source reduction.* We support efforts to reduce the amount of waste that is generated in the first place. When voluntary reduction doesn't work, mandated reduction—for example, restrictions on plastics and packaging—may be necessary. We realize these steps are controversial, and there is disagreement about their effectiveness, but the state should continue to consider them as part of an overall approach.

The committee has discussed legislation that would impose a surcharge on solid waste disposal at landfills and incinerators, with the surcharge used to fund DES solid waste programs that provide assistance to municipalities. My understanding is that the proposal would be either to exempt municipalities from the surcharge, or to rebate the amounts they pay. We can very cautiously support such a proposal, subject to a strong assurance that (1) there is no net cost to municipalities, and (2) all money retained by the state goes to a dedicated fund for the sole purpose of supporting solid waste programs.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues and on any legislation that may come from your committee.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,



Cordell Johnston
Government Affairs Counsel