

Thank you, Chair Sheldon and members of the Environment Committee, for taking testimony on H. 652.

This bill is focused on two items; one is the Protection of Lake Memphremagog and the other is the Prevention of Leachate from ever being discharged into the watershed of Lake Memphremagog. H. 652 provides a number of reasons why Lake Memphremagog needs protection. Lake Memphremagog is an international lake that sits between Vermont and Quebec. It is a beautiful and picturesque body of water. Some within this committee have toured the lake and the area. Historically, the lake has and continues to have an economic impact upon the development of a number of communities that surround it. That impact has in the past been used for transportation, logging, and electricity production and today Lake Memphremagog is known for its recreational and tourism activities. The lake is a precious commodity that provides drinking water to my district's neighbors to the north in Sherbrooke as well as some homes along the lake in Vermont. The majority of drinking water is used in the municipality of Sherbrooke which supports more than 175,000 people.

From 2009 until 2019, Newport's wastewater treatment plant disposed of untreated landfill leachate that contained perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl materials (PFAS). Current treatment systems cannot remove all PFAS (PFOS & PFOA) from leachate although Casella Waste Systems is working on this problem. I have actually toured the Coventry Landfill and seen their efforts related to this problem which is commendable. Technology today can only do so much, which is why H. 652 is being submitted. There currently exist reports from ANR, the Department of Fish & Wildlife, and others reporting PFAS contamination of Lake Memphremagog's waters. Four different fish species have shown signs of PFOS within their tissue. People can be exposed to PFAS in different ways and that exposure may lead to a number of health issues. The PFAS chemicals break down slowly and can last for decades if not longer.

H. 652 proposes prohibiting the discharge of leachate from a landfill or a solid waste management facility into the watershed of Lake Memphremagog regardless of whether the leachate has been treated or not. This prohibition would be for both direct discharge from a landfill or a solid waste management facility and the transfer of the leachate to a wastewater treatment facility in the watershed of Lake Memphremagog for discharge. H. 652 also asks that our state environmental agencies take on a greater role in oversight and restrict discharges into Lake Memphremagog as well as all the tributaries that feed into the lake. Fresh water is becoming more and more a valuable resource throughout our world. We therefore should do all that we can to protect this valuable resource called Lake Memphremagog.

Thank you,

WOODMAN H. PAGE
VT House of Representatives
Orleans-2