

Deadly poisons in dump no threat: Hooker Corp.

(Star 31 Aug. 81 p. A9)

By Peter Rickwood Toronto Star

The removal of deadly chemicals from its dumpsite in Niagara Falls, N.Y. is "clearly unnecessary . . . ill considered and unsupported," Hooker Chemicals Corp. has told a United States court.

The company is fighting a court battle against environmental groups — some of which have the financial backing of the Canadian government — which insist Lake Ontario is in grave danger unless the chemicals are removed.

Both the U.S. and New York state governments side with Hooker, arguing removal of the chemical isn't feasible.

The world's largest known deposit — about 2,000 pounds — of the most toxic industrial chemical ever manufactured, the dioxin TCDD, is buried in the dump.

Up to court

Hooker reached an agreement with the U.S. government and New York State earlier this year for controlling the dump.

Now it's up to a U.S. district court judge to decide whether to ratify the agreement or accept the objections

of Toronto's Pollution Probe, Operation Clean Niagara — a conservation group in Niagara-on-the-Lake — and a Buffalo-based environment group.

Federal Environment Minister John Roberts funded the Pollution Probe objection and also provided senior scientists from his ministry to give supporting evidence.

Option open

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has defended the agreement in district court, saying that removal of the wastes is not ruled out within the settlement.

"If nothing else works, it may be that excavation will be selected as a remedy by the government notwithstanding the risks and engineering difficulties associated with that technology . . ." the submission says.

The proposals came under fire from Canadian and U.S. scientists who said they don't take into account the fact that the Hyde Park dump is on highly fissured bedrock.

Scientists also say the flow of water in the bedrock had not been accurately interpreted and the agreement will last only 35 years, but the dump will remain a hazard indefinitely.