

U.S. verifies seepage from Niagara dump

By Peter Rickwood Toronto Star

United States federal scientists agree with Canadian experts that toxic chemicals from the Hyde Park chemical dump are seeping through the walls of the Niagara gorge below the dump.

However, they don't see the seepage as significant, contrary to Canadian arguments last year that the presence of the chemicals means the dump cannot be effectively sealed off.

Canadian experts have argued that the dump residue must be exhumed and incinerated in order to prevent massive pollution of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario.

But the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says in its report, the levels detected on the gorge walls is no different than what is present in the river. The EPA report was filed with a Buffalo court earlier this week. Ratification would lead to sealing off the dump.

It's estimated there are about

2,000 pounds of the dioxin TCDD in the dump, making it the world's largest depository of the deadliest chemical ever produced by man.

Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corp. with dumped 80,000 tons of chemicals at the Hyde Park site reached agreement with the U.S. government and State of New York in secret to seal off the dump by capping it and drilling wells to collect chemical seepage.

When the agreement was challenged by environmental groups in the U.S. and Canada, a federal U.S. District Court Judge ordered a public examination, resulting in this week's EPA report.

Environmentalists fear that the plan to seal off the Hyde Park dump might become a blueprint for similar action in the numerous other chemical dumps in the area.

The latest U.S. position is being reviewed by Markham hydrogeologist Grant Anderson, and lawyers from Toronto and Buffalo.