

GREENPEACE

Toronto
Lakefills

Toronto Regional Office
427 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X7
(416) 922-3011

LAKEFILLING ON THE TORONTO WATERFRONT

Between 1956 and 1982, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners dumped a total of 25,072,466 cubic metres of fill into Lake Ontario, adding 188 hectares of land to the Eastern Headland, or Leslie Street Spit. During the 1970s, three other lakefill areas were created by the Metropolitan Toronto Region Conservation Authority: Humber Bay received 5 million cubic metres of fill representing 45 hectares of land; Ashbridges Bay received 1 million cubic metres of fill representing 17 hectares of land; and Bluffers Park received 2 million cubic metres of fill representing 30 hectares of new waterfront land.

Cost - Benefit Analysis of Lakefilling

In a recently released report evaluating lakefilling activities in Ontario, the following two reasons were given for using lakefilling to create recreational waterfront land:

1. "Very little shoreline was in public ownership and additional shoreline for public use would had to have been purchased at far greater expense than the cost of creating new land; and
2. development, re-development and certain types of maintenance projects generated up to 61,000 m³ of clean fill per week. This material could have been obtained for waterfront filling at no cost."

Lakefill Material is Contaminated

In 1980, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) and Environment Canada conducted a joint study of the quality of fill being dumped at the Leslie Street Spit. Their conclusion: many of the fill loads were so contaminated that they failed to meet MOE Open Water Disposal Guidelines.

In 1983, Environment Canada conducted another study of fill quality which concluded that 52 percent of the fill exceeded MOE Lakefill Quality guidelines for at least one contaminant. The study also found that 30 percent of the fill loads contained high levels of lead.

In 1987, yet another study of fill quality was conducted on behalf of MOE which concluded that 67 percent of the fill loads destined for the Spit were contaminated with a variety of toxic substances. Individual fill loads contained: PCBs as high as

Fondation Greenpeace Foundation

2623 West Fourth Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6K 1P8 Phone: (604) 736-0321

Autres Bureaux Nationaux / Other National Offices:

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0.353 parts per million (ppm), or 7 times the MOE guideline; lead at 3700 ppm, or 74 times the MOE guideline; cadmium at 40 ppm, or 40 times the guideline; and mercury at 0.686 ppm, or twice the guideline. Testing of historical in-place fill revealed that past fill quality was likely worse; 1973 sections of the Leslie Street Spit showed concentrations of PCBs as high as 8.6 ppm and mercury as high as 2.5 ppm.

Environmental Cost - Benefit Analysis

All the studies agree: the majority of fill generated in the Metro Toronto area **IS NOT** clean. This should prompt every concerned citizen to reconsider the cost-benefit analysis of lakefilling. We all benefit from publically accessible recreational waterfront land. However, cost must not be restricted to merely economic considerations. Thirty years of dumping toxic fill into Lake Ontario has exacted a high cost from our environment. And when the environment pays, we pay too.

Stop Lakefilling Immediately

Greenpeace calls on the Minister of the Environment in Ontario, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and the Metropolitan Toronto Region Conservation Authority to immediately halt all lakefilling activity in the Toronto Harbour and pursue other less environmentally costly means to secure publically accessible waterfront lands.