



STOP CONTAMINATING OUR WATERFRONT

16 SECOND STREET WARD'S ISLAND TORONTO, ONTARIO M5J 2A8

February 19, 1988
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROUP CALLS FOR MORATORIUM ON LAKEFILLING

The Toronto construction industry's practice of using Lake Ontario as an unlicensed waste disposal site must stop. Today, a coalition of environmental groups, SCOW (Stop Contaminating Our Waterfront) called for a moratorium on lakefilling in the Province in response to the release of three Ontario Ministry of the Environment reports on fill quality at the Leslie Street Spit.

The reports showed that the majority of excavation fill from construction sites used to build the Spit over the last 25 years has been contaminated by one or more pollutants including lead, mercury and PCB's.

"We have been calling for a halt to the practice of lakefilling since the early 80's when the first tests showed contamination," said Sarah Miller, Spokesperson for SCOW. "Since then we have seen the levels creep up from 25% to 67% despite the introduction in 1983 of the Ministry of the Environment's Lakefill Quality Assurance Program (LQUAP)."

This fill has gone into the construction of the Tommy Thompson Park and of confined disposal cells for contaminated dredged materials from the Keating Channel." Ironically," said Ms. Miller "some of the fill samples have tested to be more contaminated than the Keating Channel dredgate. We need to evaluate the effects of this folly on the aquatic environment, on the growing wildlife and bird populations on the Spit, as well as the potential for impacts on park visitors."

The LQUAP program to screen fill quality has failed to stop the continuing contamination for several reasons:

- . It only requires developers in the inner city to test their soil before gaining permission to dump it at the Spit.
- . A few samples from each construction site can easily miss contaminated sections of the site. Many of these sites were previously industrial sites, or were old landfill sites.
- . The program does not apply to small contractors, whose trucks only receive visual inspection before gaining entrance to dump on the spit.
- . There is a much more widespread soil contamination problem than is recognized. Most urban surface soils are contaminated over guidelines by lead.
- . The LQUAP Program only applies to the Leslie Street Spit

although there are other active lakefills along Toronto's Waterfront.

They are: The Toronto Harbour Commission's (THC's) Outer Harbour Marina. (The THC has plans to continue filling at the Spit for several more years.) The Metro Toronto Conservation Authority is currently filling at Colonel Sam Bois Smith Park and the Guildwood Inn and have plans for a large lakefill for the easterly beaches East Point Park adjacent to the Easterly Water Filtration Plant. The Metro Works Department is planning a large lakefill project in conjunction with the extension of the sewage treatment plant outflow at Ashbridges Bay. Several other Conservation Authorities have plans for lakefill projects in the western Lake Ontario Basin. "The proximity of many of these sites to several of our drinking water intakes should be of concern to all of the citizens of Toronto", said Ms. Miller.

The Toronto construction industry can afford to dispose of their contaminated fill safely. Currently the cost of the foundation of a downtown development is less than 1% of the total building cost. The Toronto Harbour Commission is currently profiting from its \$10.00 a load charge to trucks for access to the Spit to dispose of their fill. This fill, deposited at the edge of the Lake is then bulldozed into water over 50 ft. in depth where much of it is lost to the lake and eroded away by wave action and storms.

In-Place Pollutant studies done last year showed that aquatic biota on the Spit's active fill face were bio-accumulating the contaminants present in the fill. SCOW called on the Ministry of the Environment to do food-chain uptake studies to measure the mobility of the contaminants found on the Spit to vegetation and to the water column and biota. Ministry suggestions that the contamination problem can be solved by over-topping the spit with clean soil are impractical. It is unlikely that the huge volumes of clean fill required could be found to accomplish this. Overtopping would not address any of the aquatic impacts as all the fill below the surface is still exposed to the lake.

Every lakefill created to date has turned into an in-place pollutant problem. These problems are not temporary construction problems that will abate. The recent Ministry Studies demonstrate that Toronto has invented a whole new way to pollute our waters. No other Great Lakes jurisdiction has espoused lakefilling to such a large degree with so little examination. The Leslie Street Spit Lakefilling program has never been the subject of an Environmental Assessment.

-30-

For more information please contact Sarah Miller SCOW 977-2410 or 368-9540