

Nicholas Stolaruk
364 Shellbourne Dr.
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Dear Mr. Stolaruk:

Thank you for your letter of April 7, 2004, to Vice President Cheney expressing your concerns regarding the movement of municipal solid waste from Canada into Michigan.

Your letter suggests that the municipal solid waste (MSW) exported from Ontario into Michigan could cause environmental harm, in part because the shipments could contain certain toxic, biological and nuclear wastes. I would like to describe some of the precautions that are in place to avoid such an incident. First, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) prohibits certain wastes, including toxics such as PCBs, hospital and nuclear wastes, from being disposed of in Michigan's MSW landfills. In addition, all MSW, whether generated inside or outside of Michigan, must be disposed of in a municipal solid waste landfill that is licensed and regularly inspected by MDEQ. These landfills must comply with State requirements that include responsible siting, safe operation and design, regular ground water monitoring, corrective action, closure and post-closure care. The Agency believes that this regulatory system for MSW, coupled with effective enforcement, ensures protection against risks to human health and the environment.

We understand that all Canadian MSW trucks crossing the border are visually checked by the U.S. Customs Service for suspicious leaks, and also checked using x-ray and radiation equipment. Any truck that does not meet the Customs standards is refused entry into the U.S. In addition, a substantial fraction of the Canadian trucks are escorted to the landfill by Customs agents to undergo detailed inspections as the trucks unload.

At the landfill, all MSW shipments are checked by landfill personnel for prohibited items as the trucks are unloaded. MDEQ also does independent inspections of all landfills every year. For example, last Spring MDEQ inspected about 5,000 incoming truckloads of both in-state and out-of-state solid waste at eight different landfills. While they did find

that the Canadian truckloads they inspected contained more yard waste and beverage containers, only one of the inspected Canadian shipments was found to contain prohibited waste other than yard waste that could not legally be disposed of within the landfills. No hazardous, hospital or nuclear waste was found in Canadian loads during MDEQ's Spring 2003 inspections. Michigan is committed to enforcing the State's environmental standards for landfills, and will continue its vigilance concerning these waste shipments.

You raise a good point that recycling is essential to reduce waste in the future. I agree. A little over a year ago, EPA launched the Resource Conservation Challenge, a challenge to all Americans to save our resources, prevent pollution and promote recycling and reuse. This challenge is about adopting a resource conservation ethic in all we do. One of our key messages is "What can you save today?" You can find detailed information about the challenge at <http://www.epa.gov/rcc>. Toronto is also working to reduce its waste generation through recycling and composting. Their goal is to stop sending any municipal solid waste to Michigan landfills by 2010. You can learn more online about Toronto's composting program at <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/compost/index.htm> and learn more about the city's recycling efforts in general at <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/garbage/index.htm>.

Thank you again for sharing your concerns about this issue. If you have any more questions, please contact Laura Coughlan of my staff by phone at 703-308-0005 or by email at Coughlan.Laura@epa.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Springer, Director
Office of Solid Waste

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