

**Questions and Answers**  
**about**  
**The Toronto Trash Problem**

In December 1996, the Metro Council of the city of Toronto voted to send most of its residents' garbage to a private landfill in southeast Michigan. The decision is not final, since the decision is subject to the approval of a regional council, and the trash shipments would not begin until January 1998. The Send It Back to Canada Campaign was formed recently to persuade Toronto to change its mind, and deal with its garbage closer to home.

**How much garbage would Toronto be sending to Michigan?**

Between 250,000 and 500,000 tons of trash each year. Looked at another way, that's enough trash *every day* to fill ten medium-sized houses.

**Where would the trash go?**

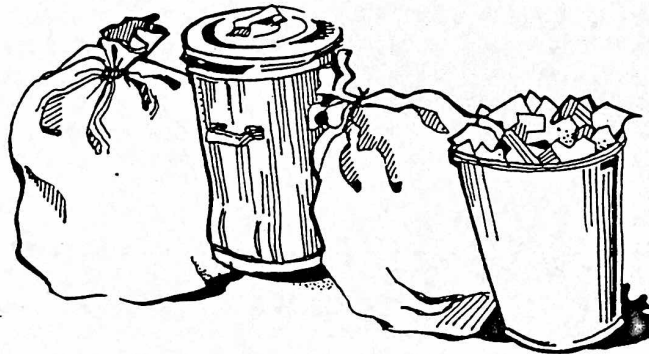
To the Arbor Hills Landfill in Salem Township, in northwestern Washtenaw County. The landfill is located about 15 miles northeast of Ann Arbor, and about 5 miles west of Plymouth.

**Who owns the landfill?**

The landfill is owned by Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI), the second largest waste management corporation in the world. Based in Houston, Texas, BFI reported 1996 revenues of \$4.4 billion.

**How much is the contract worth?**

BFI will charge the City of Toronto between \$65 million and \$130 million over the five years of the contract.



**How many trucks would Toronto send to Michigan?**

Approximately 40 trailer trucks every working day.

**Are there rules about heavy truck traffic on Michigan roads?**

Trucks need to comply with weight limits for safety and road wear purposes. It is a widely accepted practice in the waste industry for trucks to exceed weight limits. Canadian trucks are required to pass through U.S. Customs on their way to Michigan locations.

**Why is Toronto sending us their trash?**

Our prices are hard to beat. Landfills in southeast Michigan charge a "tipping fee" less than one-half the price of Ontario landfills. The price difference more than makes up for Toronto's extra cost of hauling thousands of tons of garbage hundreds of miles each day.

### **How much out-of-state trash is exported to Michigan?**

Quite a bit already, and this is before Toronto has started to send us theirs. Of the 42 million cubic yards of garbage dumped in Michigan landfills, 5.7 million cubic yards, or 14% of the total, come from outside state borders. Canada accounts for the majority of out-of-state waste, exporting 2.6 million cubic yards per year to our state.

### **Why are Michigan landfill prices so low?**

There are far more landfills in Michigan than are needed to hold the state's garbage for decades to come. Over the past four years, the state agency which regulates landfills (now called the Department of Environmental Quality) has allowed four new landfills to open in Wayne County alone, despite the fact that the region already had more than 20 years disposal capacity. The waste companies which own these landfills decided to build the new dumps so they could market their landfill space to out-of-state cities and businesses. The glut of landfill space leads to rock-bottom prices, cheaper than in any state or province in the Great Lakes region.

### **Why doesn't the State of Michigan do something about the problem?**

They could, but the waste industry is influential in Lansing. In the last election cycle, the garbage companies' political action committees (PACs) contributed almost \$200,000 to influential state legislators. More was donated to the state political parties and to the governor's campaign fund. The industry is lobbying the Legislature to weaken landfill siting laws even further, so that even more landfills could be built in Michigan.

### **Why is it a problem to have low landfill prices and too many landfills?**

They lead to less recycling and more groundwater pollution. Low landfill prices discourage recycling, since public and private investments in recycling are usually evaluated in comparison to the price of landfill disposal. When landfill prices are artificially low, recycling gets ignored. An over-supply of landfill space threatens drinking water. Recent research has found that even modern, so-called "sanitary" landfills for household garbage eventually leak pollutants into groundwater. And almost all landfills are located in rural areas where neighbors rely on groundwater for their drinking water.

### **What can we do to stop out-of-state waste in general?**

Congress has to pass a law which allows states to control waste coming in from outside their borders. And then Michigan would need to pass its own law. Senator Carl Levin and Rep. Lynn Rivers are developing bills which would give states the power to stop garbage exports. In Michigan, Rep. Liz Brater (Ann Arbor) has introduced a resolution supporting the congressional bills. And, Senator Loren Bennett (Canton) has introduced a bill which would stop the trash if Congress acts. The Send It Back to Canada Campaign supports all of these efforts.

### **What can we do to stop the Toronto trash deal?**

New laws could stop it cold, but even if our elected officials don't act fast enough, we can still pressure Toronto to reconsider. The Send It Back to Canada Campaign is collecting letters to Toronto decision-makers which we plan to deliver there in a large trash can.

Address your letters to:

Norman Sterling  
Minister of Environment & Energy  
135 St. Clair Avenue West  
Toronto, ONT M4V 1P5

Deliver your letters to:

Ecology Center  
117 N. Division  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

**Thanks for Your Support!!**

*If you would like to get more involved, or if you have questions about this issue, please call 313-761-3186 x104, or attach a note for the Ecology Center in your letter.*