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For immediate release

Landfill should be shut until public is heard

Public, independent experts should be consulted before troubled hazardous waste dump re-opened

Safety-Kleen's hazardous waste landfill in Corunna, Ontario, should be shut until the public and truly independent experts have a chance to scrutinize the situation and make recommendations, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) said today.

"The 'midnight re-opening' of the troubled hazardous waste landfill was a premature step that repeats the same mistakes that resulted in the problem in the first place," said Anne Mitchell, executive director of CIELAP

The expansion of the Safety-Kleen operation was approved by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in 1997 without a public hearing. The expansion started leaking water and methane gas in September, 1999. A second methane leak was discovered in December, prompting the MOE to order the site shut on December 14.

Ten days later, on Christmas Eve, on the basis of assurances from a group of Safety-Kleen's consultants, the MOE allowed the site to re-open.

"The Ontario Ministry of the Environment should slow down and involve the public in these decisions," said Mark Winfield, CIELAP's research director.

"The landfill's neighbours have the most to lose if a mistake is made. Environment Minister Tony Clement should make funds available to them to hire independent experts. Then he should hold public hearings to test the company's claims and the experts' findings. Only then should a decision on re-opening the dump be made," Dr. Winfield said.

CIELAP today filed a freedom of information request seeking all documents, reports, briefs, analyses and e-mails related to the decision to shut the landfill and to re-open it.

Further information and copies of the Freedom of Information request are available.

Anne Mitchell
Executive Director
(416)-923-3529 ext 25
info@cielap.org

The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy has for been commenting on and monitoring policy and regulatory changes related to the environment for 30 years.