



Hazardous Waste in Ontario: Progress and Challenges – September 2007

For over three decades CIELAP has worked to improve the management of hazardous waste in Ontario and Canada. Since the time that CIELAP released its 2000 and 2003 *Open for Toxics* reports the Ontario government has made significant progress in addressing hazardous waste, most notably with the Land Disposal Restrictions Program in 2005. However, law and policy gaps remain.

Quick Facts:

- In Canada millions of tonnes of waste are generated each year as by-products of industries' activities, and six million tonnes of this waste contain toxic substances such as arsenic, mercury, and lead. Many chemicals in hazardous waste are potentially harmful to human health and the environment.
- Between 1994 and 1998 the movement of US hazardous and liquid industrial waste into Ontario increased 138%. During same period, hazardous waste and liquid industrial generation by Ontario industries and facilities rose 41.8%. Furthermore, Ontario was the only jurisdiction in North America to accept untreated hazardous waste. Recent data shows that there has been no overall reduction in the amount of hazardous and liquid industrial waste generated in Ontario over the years 2000 to 2005. In August 2005, however, amendments made by the Land Disposal Restriction Regulation began to require the pretreatment of hazardous waste – making Ontario's standards equivalent to those of the United States.
- Some unresolved issues exist with the Land Disposal Restriction Regulation. One key concern is that new amendments do not apply to small-quantity producers such as local dry cleaners that collectively produce 450 tonnes of hazardous waste annually.
- The establishment of the Hazardous Waste Information Network (HWIN) in 2002 was a key step towards identifying hazardous waste generators. However, Ontario's auditor general reported in 2005 that 30% of hazardous waste generators had not complied with the requirements of HWIN.
- The new Land Disposal Restriction Regulation does not address hazardous waste disposal into sewer systems, such as landfill leachate.
- It is difficult to estimate the level of untreated contaminants entering Ontario's water system through run-off into stormwater gutters and drains since there are no formal stormwater monitoring requirements at the provincial level in Ontario.
- The Ontario government must pay attention to waste management considerations when it develops policy in other directions. The plan to ban the sale of incandescent light bulbs in Ontario by 2012, which is an excellent initiative from an energy standpoint, will also be problematic because the use and disposal of fluorescent light bulbs will increase. Used fluorescent light bulbs are considered to be household hazardous waste and need careful disposal because of the small amount of mercury they contain. The infrastructure is not yet in place to deal with this waste, however.
- A government website designed to attract business and industry to Ontario states that the province has the resources to deal with all sorts of hazardous waste. Promoting Ontario's capacity to process hazardous waste is, however, inconsistent with the province's supposed pollution prevention aims.