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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 14, 1982, 10 a.m.

Encourage private disposal companies
says manager of Stouffville landfill

There should be a firm commitment by the province to work with private enterprise in establishing waste facilities in Ontario, says James Temple, district manager, Waste Management of Canada Inc.

Waste Management is the parent company of York Sanitation Ltd., owner of the Whitchurch-Stouffville landfill.

The Ontario government should "establish clear and definitive regulations for the design and operation of waste disposal facilities," Mr. Temple told delegates to the 29th Ontario Industrial Waste Conference in Toronto this morning.

He said also that public hearings on the social impact
and public opinion should be separate from any technical
hearings on disposal methods, "except where a technology
may be unproved or questionable for that specific site and
poses a possible health or nuisance hazard."

End

JAMES G. TEMPLE
District Manager
Waste Management of Canada Inc.

BIOGRAPHY

Jim Temple was born in Regina, Saskatchewan and educated in England. He graduated from Durham University with a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering.

As a young man, Mr. Temple served as a pilot in the Royal Air Force.

Early in his business career he spent several years in the packaging industry as an industrial engineer and supervisor before joining Waste Management of Canada as a General Manager.

For the past five years, Mr. Temple has been responsible for Waste Management's waste disposal projects, including the company's landfills.

As District Manager for Waste Management, he is now fully responsible for all of the company's operations in Canada.

End.

DOES BUSINESS HAVE ANY BUSINESS IN THE WASTE BUSINESS?

by

James G. Temple, P.Eng.
District Manager
Waste Management of Canada Inc.

June 14, 1982

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29th Ontario Industrial Waste Conference

Prince Hotel
Toronto

DOES BUSINESS HAVE ANY BUSINESS IN THE WASTE BUSINESS?

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A hundred years from now your great-great-grandchildren are going to go down to the Royal Ontario Museum and see a likeness of me. The inscription on the pedestal will read: Homo Landfillus Privatus -- Extinct circa 1982.

However, unlike the Dodo or the carrier pigeon or even the brontosaurus, I doubt that we in the private waste management industry will be missed.

Last fall the Blenheim town council in Southwestern Ontario called for government ownership of the controversial Ridge Landfill. The councillors of that nice little farm community seem to have had it with private landfill operators. They suggested that the Ontario government set up a Waste Management Commission to oversee municipal and solid waste dumping.

The implication seemed to be that private operators were incapable of disposing of waste without somehow making a nuisance of themselves.

More recently -- in fact just a month ago -- Ontario's 13 regional chairmen said they were going to ask the Minister of the Environment Keith Norton to take full responsibility for all the landfills in Ontario.

In this case it wasn't a dissatisfaction with private enterprise that united the regional chairmen. They were upset because our landfill at Stouffville had been ordered closed -- even though the Environmental Assessment Board had recommended that we be allowed to expand our landfill working area.

The questions are: How did we arrive at such an unfortunate state of affairs in Ontario? How is it that private waste management companies are being treated as if they are what they bury? Who or what forces are we running up against that are determined to keep private enterprise out of the waste disposal business?

Is it our own mismanagement? Is there a conspiracy of bureaucrats determined to undermine our garbage empires -- so that they can reign supreme? Has mass hysteria about pollution, Love Canal and Hooker Chemical driven the public into the protective arms of government -- even though government is no more credible with environmentalists than we are? Or has the media done it all with mirrors -- which reflect only half-truths and lynch-mob rhetoric?

I've heard convincing arguments on all of those theories. Personally, I think the problem is one of social and political prejudice. Garbage, even one's own garbage, is repugnant. It excites a very strong distaste in most people.

Every individual creates half a ton of garbage every year, yet when he puts it out at the curbside he doesn't want to see it or think about it again. That prejudice against our own garbage is as at least as intolerant as the ancient Roman's feelings toward the Christians.

But to get rid of garbage you can't feed it to the lions.

And as for recycling and recovery: Well then you're really getting into the area of science fiction. North America has had its share of huge expensive failures in this area. Systems that won't work. Systems that seem to be permanently in the "shakedown" phase. Systems that are too expensive to operate. And systems that make an environmental nuisance of themselves.

*can be said
of disposal
as well*

In 1968 the Ontario Ministry of the Environment predicted that 85 percent of all urban waste would be recycled by 1985. But that was back in the days of flower children. Governments in those heady days were determined to be on the side of peace and making love, not war, and turning garbage into chocolate fudge. And is 85 percent of urban waste being recycled? No -- 85 percent of urban waste is being buried -- in landfills -- just like the one at Stouffville.

I don't mean to imply that we are not making progress with waste management technology. We are. And spectacularly. Many companies in North America are working on waste-to-energy technologies. And the Europeans have been successful in that area for nearly 30 years. But in Europe energy costs have been traditionally about twice as high as energy costs in North America. And there is a critical lack of space for landfills. As a result of these factors the burning of waste for energy became economical in Europe and meanwhile they've made the process environmentally acceptable.

so what's
wrong
here.

In North America there are between 10 and 15 waste-to-energy facilities underway or planned and each of them has a good chance of success. But the installed capacity will be no more than 20,000 tons a day. In other words they'll only serve between five and ten million of the continent's 250 million people.

The other 240 million people will have to bury their garbage. There's nothing else to be done with it. Ronald Reagan and Anne Gorsuch, his administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency, had the notion that North America's garbage should be buried at sea. That was a recent suggestion. And that faint sound of thunder you hear is the stampede of environmentalists rushing to defend marine life.

What about the environmentalists? Well God bless them they changed my business from one of trucking garbage and unloading it in the town dump to one of transporting urban waste to engineered sanitary landfills. We're not just "garbage men" anymore, we're engineers and hydrogeologists and lab technicians. Government regulation -- in response to the concerns of environmentalists -- has made professionals of us. Frustrated and half-crazy professionals, perhaps, but professionals just the same.

In Ontario, the professionals from private waste disposal companies are up against enormous odds if they intend to stay in the waste disposal business.

~~They must first find a site. They must be convinced it can be transformed into a landfill which satisfies the unwritten standards of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.~~ They must satisfy the Ontario Municipal Board and a host of regional and local bylaws and statutes. They must persuade the Environmental Assessment Board that the site will be neither hazardous nor a nuisance to its neighbours. Then the Minister of the Environment -- whose decisions often reflect the advice of his ministry experts -- must be prepared to assess courageously his political and ministerial responsibilities and alight on your side of the fence.

While this is all going on of course you are likely to be set upon by neighbours and by friends of neighbours who have read about Love Canal. By that, I don't mean to trivialize the health hazards connected with the random and irresponsible unloading of toxic wastes on an unsuspecting public. But none of us here today are in that business. However, since Love Canal, even harmless household wastes are greeted with suspicion.

Three years ago we at Waste Management of Canada had high hopes that our site at Maple would be one of the grandest and most celebrated landfills in the Western World.

So far there has been very little to celebrate. First there was a very long hearing before the Environmental Assessment Board which we lost. Then a hearing before the Environmental Appeal Board, which gave us the go ahead, provided we lived up to 19 conditions. And finally there was the sale of the site to Metropolitan Toronto. I must say with a sigh that that lovely big hole in the ground has just about become the grave of our dreams for a viable private landfill business in Ontario. And Stouffville could become our headstone.

The Stouffville story is equally tragic and equally telling as far as private enterprise in the waste disposal business in Ontario is concerned.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville landfill in the 1960s was a depository for thousands of gallons of liquid industrial waste. But in this respect it was no different than many sites in Ontario, including those right here in Toronto. Those landfills all accepted large quantities of liquid industrial wastes. Some in the province still do. The difference is that the citizens of Stouffville have been made aware of the liquid wastes in their neighbouring landfill. Most communities have no idea what is in their landfills; no analysis has ever been made.

At any rate, during six weeks of last Spring and Summer, we went to an Environmental Assessment Board hearing and persuaded the Board that our management of the site at Stouffville was such that we should be allowed to expand our working area. The Board agreed and recommended to the Ministry of the Environment that we be allowed to expand. But in the background there was a band of well-organized Stouffville residents who were determined to see the site closed.

Their campaign was quite effective. For starters they announced that they suspected that the drinking water in nearby private wells was being polluted by the landfill. But the Ministry of the Environment had been testing 13 private wells around the site for 15 years and found no evidence of pollution. And for the last 11 years the Ministry has been examining the water from 22 test wells on the site without finding any evidence that the nearby private wells are threatened in any way.

But the citizens conducted their own tests of wells near the landfill and publicized their findings. Their tests indicated they had found contaminated water near the landfill. So the Ministry -- in defence of its own and its laboratory's credibility -- went to work. In three days they conducted 3,000 tests on the water on and around the landfill. Result: several definitive statements from the Minister of the Environment.

"There is absolutely no indication that the drinking waters are contaminated by the landfill or any other source."

"We found no pesticides, no PCBs, no dioxins, and no hexachlorobenzenes."

"All the water quality parameters for drinking waters were within the Ministry's water quality criteria."

With all that praise, the Minister ordered the site closed by July 1983. Ironically, the site was not ordered closed because of the health issues. The Ministry cited other reasons. None of them were convincing, as far as we were concerned, so we appealed the decision.

However, the Ministry decision does beg a question? Why go to a public hearing if the Ministry has the option not to attend or even review with care the evidence taken under oath?

Perhaps we should take a close look at the hearing process. Certainly, if the hearings are meant to take the heat out of a belligerent issue, they don't. If they're meant to give the public an opportunity to participate, they don't. If they're meant to air the technical and engineering protocols, plans, and practicalities, they do. But the ultimate decision-makers in the Ministry can choose to differ with the Board's conclusions about them.

On the first day of a hearing into a landfill, the hearing room is filled with concerned citizens and the media. On the second day, the story is in the paper and the concerned citizens and the media begin to wander away while the turgid technical details are laid out on the operating table, dissected, and quarreled over by lawyers and experts. If there is any more useless exercise it must be jogging on the way to the guillotine.

Besides the fact that the results of the hearings may have no influence on the Ministry, there seems to be no useful purpose for exploring in excruciating detail the engineering specifics of a landfill during a hearing.

Wouldn't it be laughable if every bridge, tunnel, ship hull, automobile brake lining, and cake mix had to go through a similar sideshow in the public interest? Is there any less potential for hazard in any one of those man-made projects or products? Then why should solid waste landfills be subjected to a hearing which is a methodical, but useless, public autopsy?

Even the last two Ontario Ministers of the Environment have recognized the absolute futility of the exercise. When interested members of the public demanded a hearing into the South Cayuga liquid industrial waste treatment and storage plant, Harry Parrott made it clear that he had all the information he needed, thanks to a two-year, \$425,000 study prepared for him by a firm of competent consultants. No hearing was necessary.

But life isn't that simple these days. If people can't get a hearing, they can certainly be heard, and in this case they were. People Power sprang up in Haldiman-Norfolk, and Donald Chant, who now heads the Ontario Waste Management Corporation, asked for a new study. As a result Chant had to announce the site was "at best borderline" and abandon it. He now prowls the province his lantern held high looking for the perfect site and the least obstreperous neighbours, or is it the perfect neighbours and least obstreperous site. In any case he has 400,000 tonnes of hazardous waste in Ontario, all awaiting a final resting place.

And now we have Keith Norton, a likeable and sensitive lawyer from Kingston, Ontario. He too has a problem with the hearing process. The Toronto Sun has Norton saying: "public hearings are just one way people may make their views known to decision makers." //

"Public hearings tend to attract the same old groups with the same old predictable views."

The Sun says "Norton suggested people wanting to have input try phone calls to open line radio shows and letters to the ministry."

I feel pretty much as the Minister does. Except that I do believe the public should have a forum where they can let the world know they do not favour a landfill in their community if that's how they feel. There should also be an opportunity for them to challenge expert opinion, if they wish. But only in areas where the technology is unproved.

Up to date that's moved

The purpose of public hearings should be to decide whether or not the public interest should prevail over the prejudices of the few. Endless days spent on technical details which can be settled ahead of time merely frustrates the hearing process. In fact no hearing should be convened until the government is satisfied the project is technically sound. At that point the public can debate both the need and any possible social or human disruptions, including the likely impact on health and the environment.

This is obvious in the extreme this is where industry is failing

In any event, in the final analysis -- private enterprise must ask, "does business have any business in the waste management business?"

Today in Ontario there are several private companies in the waste disposal business. We are well-financed, competent, and can take care of the majority of the province's waste, including hazardous wastes. Most, if not all waste technology comes from private enterprise. But we are not being allowed to use our talents and knowledge. And we certainly don't get the feeling from the provincial government that it's interested in working with us so that we can contribute more substantially than we have been allowed to do recently. If anything, we get the unshakeable feeling that the government is doing everything in its power to discourage private industry from operating in Ontario. I cannot think of a single new major waste disposal project in Ontario which is the result of private enterprise initiatives. In fact private industry is taking a smaller and smaller share of the responsibility for disposing of waste in Ontario, even though we want to do more.

We're certainly not afraid to face a fair and reasonable hearing process. In fact we welcome the opportunity to discuss our technologies and our plans, and we do accept responsibility quite proudly.

But in today's social and regulatory climate I'm afraid I would only recommend the waste management business to my children under the following conditions:

1. If there was a firm commitment by the province to work with private enterprise in establishing waste facilities in Ontario.

2. If there was an attempt by the Ministry of the Environment to establish clear and definitive regulations for the design and operation of waste disposal facilities.

3. If the government had to study and respond within a certain period of time to schemes, plans, and drawings submitted to them for approval.

4. If a uniform approach to liability insurance and post-closing funding was required for all private and public projects.

5. If the government fully and evenly enforced its regulations, even if it meant an inconvenience to a government department or agency.

6. If there was a public hearing on social impact and public opinion separate from any technical hearings on disposal methods, except where a technology may be unproved or questionable for that specific site and poses a possible health or nuisance hazard.

Otherwise I'm afraid you see before you a dying breed: the last of the private waste management professionals: homo landfillus privatus.