

# EXTRACTIONS



a newsletter from **O'CONNOR ASSOCIATES**

Number 6, November 1988

## **QUEBEC COMPILES LIST OF CONTAMINATED PROPERTIES**

In an effort to prevent industrial land contaminated with toxic materials from being used for residential housing, provincial officials in Quebec have compiled a list of 11 000 potentially contaminated sites. The list is being circulated to municipalities, engineers, urban planners and lenders in an effort to alert those involved in land development of possible dangers. It is expected municipalities, faced with the prospect of approving developments on one of the old industrial sites listed, will refer the plans to provincial authorities who will require that landowners complete site studies. Lands that prove to be free of contamination will be given clearance for development. If contamination is found, however, developers will be forced to underwrite the cost of cleanup.

## **CANADA'S EPA**

After much debate, extensive public review, and the incorporation of some 260 amendments, Canada's new *Environmental Protection Act* has been given unanimous approval by Parliament. Politicians on the government side of the house hailed it as the strongest example of environmental legislation in the western world. Opposition politicians, while they voted in favour of the legislation, were not so effusive. One less-than-enthusiastic opposition Member called the new law "a dainty step in the right direction." Another dismissed it as "an example of Tory rhetoric on the environment." As with most federal laws, the new Act offers a mechanism for enforcing regulations, but actual enforcement will require political will and specific funding.

## **MISSING DIESEL FOUND**

Underground testing at the Los Angeles International Airport has revealed the presence of a layer of spilled diesel fuel up to 1.6 m thick. Leaking pipes connecting underground fuel tanks are believed to be the source of the problem.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT VS. RISK PERCEPTION**

The public does not always perceive environmental risks in the same way as scientists. That fact was recently driven home when the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) polled 70 of its senior staff and compared their responses to a public opinion poll. The two groups were in conspicuous disagreement over nine forms of environmental risk, and in agreement on seven others. Five additional kinds of environmental risk were ignored by one or the other of the two surveys.

Environmental risks considered high by both groups included: outdoor air pollution; pesticide residues in food; pesticide contamination of air, water, and soil; exposure to toxic compounds in the workplace; and the lowered quality of public drinking water.

The public also viewed risks arising from chemical and hazardous waste disposal, from generalized water pollution, and from accidental chemical spills to be high, whereas EPA specialists classed risks from those three sources as low. Other sources of high risk identified by the EPA managers included ozone depletion, indoor air pollution, and exposure to radon or other non-nuclear radiation. The public viewed risks from the latter three sources as low. Both groups thought risks from planetary greenhouse warming and genetic engineering were low.

## **A NATION OF CRIMINALS**

Editors of the Regina Leader-Post recently expressed opposition to suggestions by Canada's Law Reform Commission that a "crime against the environment" provision be added to the Criminal Code. While admitting the idea of applying the heavy hand of criminal law to environmental regulation is appealing, the editors rather astutely worried whether any Canadian citizen might be truly innocent before such a law.

## **PINES MONITOR POLLUTION**

News commentators have been quick to point to the recent spate of dry weather throughout central North America as a possible first taste of the greenhouse effect brought about by atmospheric pollution. Evidence exists, however, to support the contention that greenhouse effects have been with us for a much longer period. Studies of bristlecone pine in the southwestern United States link the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide over the last 100 years with an otherwise unexplained increase in growth by the trees. Bristlecones are found in dry, mountainous areas and live for up to 2000 years. Annual growth rings laid down by the trees reflect environmental conditions over their lives and appear to provide a ready-made record of increasing carbon dioxide pollution.

## **CORPORATE GOOD SENSE**

The U.S. pharmaceutical firm, Eli Lilly & Co., recently refused to supply a potent herbicide to the U.S. government. Drug control officials wanted the herbicide in order to mount a wide-ranging airborne spraying program of cocaine plantations in Peru.

## **WASTE SERVICES DIRECTORY**

An Alberta Special Waste Services Directory is now available. The directory lists the services offered by more than 80 companies involved in waste management. A copy can be obtained free of charge by calling the Waste Line at 1-800-252-9300.

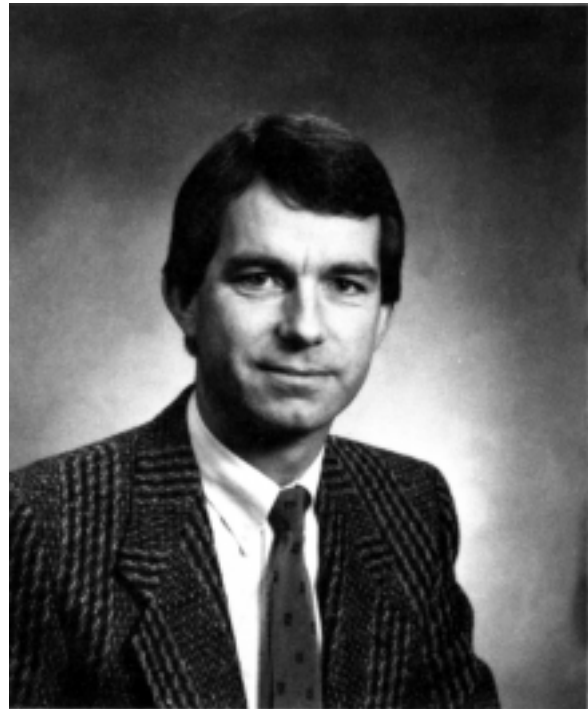
## **PUBLICATIONS**

*Solving Hazardous Waste Problems: Learning from Dioxins.* Edited by Jurgen H. Exner and published by the American Chemical Society, 1987, 1155 Sixteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, U.S.A. 398 pages. (\$79.95 US).

*Industrial Radiation Hazards Deskbook.* Written by Nicholas P. Cheremisinoff, Paul N. Cheremisinoff and Michael F. Teresinski, published by Technomic Publishing Company, Inc., 1987, 851 New Holland Avenue, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17604, U.S.A. 221 pages. (\$39 US).

*Underground Storage Tanks Guidebook.* Written by Paul N. Cheremisinoff, John G. Calsana and Robert P. Ouelette, published by Pudvan Publishing Company, 1987, 1935 Shermer Road, Northbrook, Illinois 60062, U.S.A. 163 pages. (\$19.95 US).

## **O'CONNOR UPDATE**



O'Connor Associates is pleased to announce that Dr. David R. Williams has joined the company's staff. Dr. Williams has over 13 years of geotechnical engineering experience in both Canada and the United States. He specializes in problems involving the behaviour of soils and in the analysis of soil-structure interaction, especially as it relates to arctic and offshore structures. In his new position, Dr. Williams actively contributes to O'Connor Associates' environmental engineering activities and maintains an on-going interest and involvement in Beaufort Sea development.

## **NOT ON OUR MAILING LIST?**

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Extractions Editor,  
#1000, 639 - 5th Avenue S.W.,  
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