

- **Subject: dumping**

ALEX ROSLIN

Following is an article from a Canadian News paper-“NOW TORONTO”-attributed with deep gratitude to my friend Alex Roslin, one of a handful of Canadians who are interested in making this world and leave this world a better place for future generations.

“Dumping in the deep”

**Ships sweep toxic trash into our lake—and feds just let it happen By
ALEX ROSLIN**

“Under the cloak of darkness, a hulking vessel slips out into deep water, seeking offshore solitude. Suddenly, the crew swings a chute over the side and a mass of debris—iron ore or possibly petroleum coke or potash—is sent shuddering to the lake floor below.

Is this fouling interlude occurring in some Third World country? Some faraway twilight zone beyond the reach of regulations and scrutiny? Actually, no. Try our own Great Lakes.

It's true we've got laws, dedicated ecologists and heaps of public monitoring when it comes to protecting our bodies of water, yet cargo ships' unleashing of leftover freight on lake flora and fauna is almost completely invisible.

Environmentalists don't know much about it, and the feds know but seem not to care. The Libs have refused thus far to sign onto an international prohibition against dumping cargo overboard and are about to amend the Canada Shipping Act to legally allow what ships in Canuck waters do anyway, following the same rules as the U.S. Coast Guard. And guess what *they* allow?

ODYSSEY OF A GREAT LAKES SAILOR

Called "cargo sweeping," this discharging is routine for the 130 vessels that ply the Great Lakes, including 16 owned or operated by Canada Steamship Lines, run by the sons of Paul Martin, the most powerful policy-maker in the country. Indeed, former CSL employees tell NOW they were shocked by the sheer volume of the company's dumping. In general, it works like this: ships jetison

the residue from their old cargos just before they take new freight into their holds. Canadian and U.S. companies release an estimated 2,500 tonnes a year into

the lakes, according to a little-noticed 1999 study by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A U.S. Coast Guard report in 2003 found that 80 per cent of dumping takes place in shipping lanes that pass through sensitive-species habitats. Both studies warn of potentially serious harm to marine life and the environment and call for more study.

Among the worst substances dumped, petroleum coke is toxic at low doses; coal can retard plant growth and cause wetland damage; and lead ore is poisonous and may contain trace elements of arsenic.

“You can’t put anything on the bottom of the lake without a permit. There is no way around those laws,” he says.

Elizabeth May of the Sierra Club of Canada is also outraged: “If it is going on in the

Great Lakes, it is illegal. The Fisheries Act is very, very clear. You don't put anything in the water that is harmful to fish."

One of the few scientists to have studied the impact of dumping is Vincent Breslin, an environmental scientist at Southern Connecticut State University. He examined the lake beds under shipping lanes in Lake Ontario in the mid-1990s in collaboration with the Canadian and U.S. Coast Guards.

"It literally looked like a paved highway [under] where the ships were going," he says. "It fundamentally changes the physical properties of the sediment."

Jennifer Nalbene, who works out of Buffalo for Great Lakes United, an environmental coalition of 170 groups in Canada and the U.S., thinks cargo sweeping "could have a very significant impact. We're dealing with lakes that are essentially diseased and whose immune system is down," she says.

Despite the concerns, the Canadian and U.S. governments seem loath to exercise any oversight. Canada has refused to sign a 1978 International Maritime Organization accord called Marpol V. Signed by 119 countries, it

stipulates that cargo sweeping should not be done in any inland waters and should take place only in the ocean, at least 12 nautical miles offshore.

RANGA IYER

The U.S. signed Marpol V in 1987, and as a result Congress banned cargo sweeping in the Great Lakes in a 1988 law. A furious U.S. shipping industry lobbied Congress for an amendment. A few years later, in 1993, the U.S. Coast Guard, which regulates the industry's environmental practices, buckled and quietly pushed through a compromise allowing cargo sweeping in the lakes with certain minor restrictions: it has to be done at least 2.6 to 12 nautical miles from shore, depending on the type of cargo, and can't be done within certain sensitive zones like spawning grounds or wetlands.

The policy places no restrictions on the type or amount of cargo dumped. Canadian shipping companies voluntarily agreed to follow the Coast Guard policy in both U.S. and Canadian waters.

The U.S. Coast Guard acknowledges that there is a “face-value contradiction” between its policy allowing cargo sweeping in the lakes and Marpol V and U.S. law, which prohibit it.

“Effectively, [Marpol says] you can’t dump anything in the Great Lakes,” admits the Coast Guard’s Washington, D.C.-based Lieutenant-Commander Mary Sohlberg.

Sohlberg is in charge of an ongoing review of policy on cargo dumping, which includes an environmental impact study. If the consequences are bad enough, she says, the practice could be banned when the policy expires in 2008.

Already, there is some indication that things are worse than existing studies suggest. The U.S. Coast Guard in its own study says its estimates

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The U.S. Coast Guard in its own study says its estimate of the amount of cargo dumped—300 pounds per ship voyage—is low because it relies on shipping company log books that are “obviously” unreliable and under-report the problem.

Similarly high figures were given independently by two other former chief engineers at CSL: Roger Stockman, who worked for the firm from 1989 to 2000, and Raj Ranganathan, who worked there from 1973 to 1993. The lakes are “not a dumping ground,” says Ranganathan. “If I wanted to keep my job, I had to shut my mouth.”

All three men say the cargo was usually dumped “discreetly,” either at night or, if in daytime, when planes or other ships weren’t nearby, to avoid attracting attention.

CSL spokeswoman Annie Paré calls cargo sweeping “a practice that results from the normal operations of a vessel during loading and unloading. The quantities involved vary

from 300 to 1,000 pounds depending on the product carried on board.” When told former CSL officers believe the numbers were much higher, Paré says, “That just doesn’t make sense. It wouldn’t be economical.” She says the CSL voluntarily follows the U.S. Coast Guard rules on dumping.

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At the Ottawa-based Canadian Shipowners Association, which represents seven companies with 75 lake-going vessels, Réjean Lanteigne denies his member firms are doing anything wrong. “It’s all dry cargo. It’s non-hazardous,” he says.

The Ontario government, which you’d think might take an interest, doesn’t seem highly motivated. At the Ministry of Natural Resources, spokesperson Steve Payne says the Great Lakes are considered Crown land; written permission for releasing any material is therefore required under the Ontario Public Lands Act. But vessels aren’t routinely monitored for dumping, he says.

So the big question is, how can the feds sign an accord mandating prohibition at the same time they're endorsing Coast Guard regs that allow dumping?

Transport Canada official Tom Morris suggests Marpol only applies to international waters and does not prohibit dumping in the lakes at all. but that interpretation isn't shared by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and U.S. Coast Guard.

Says IMO spokesperson Lee Adamson, when it comes to the feds' rendition of Marpol, "Canada is not part

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