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30 January 2019

Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington St, Ottawa, ON K1P 5K9, Canada
E-Mail: pm@pm.gc.ca

Subject: Appeal to Canadian government to Take Action on Canadian Garbage Illegally Exported to the Philippines

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Greetings from the Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines, Inc. (EcoWaste Coalition), a non-profit environmental network of over 140 public interest groups working for a zero waste and toxics-free society.

We write to appeal to you, to take action to resolve the dumping scandal involving the illegal export of wastes from Canada to the Philippines. At issue are 103 shipping container vans of mixed garbage from Canada that were illegally exported and dumped in the Philippines. The scandal has dragged on for five years without resolution, despite promises from the Canadian government to address the problem, including public statements made by yourself as Prime Minister.

Household trash, used adult diapers, and electronic waste

The 103 shipping containers of mixed garbage from Canada, wrongly declared as scrap plastics for recycling, entered our ports in [2013-2014](#). The waste actually contained household trash, used adult diapers, and electronic waste. Our Bureau of Customs intercepted the illegal shipments upon notification by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). According to the DENR, the garbage shipments are in violation of DENR Administrative Order 2013-22, which states that “no importation of heterogenous and unsorted plastic materials shall be allowed” and that “all plastics shall have no traces of toxic materials.” The shipments further violate the [Basel Convention](#) on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which says that “the State of export shall ensure that the wastes in question are taken back by the exporter or the generator or, if necessary, by itself into the State of export.”

Prime Minister promised return of the waste in 2017

During your visit to the Philippines in November 2017 for the 31st ASEAN Summit, you [assured](#) President Rodrigo Duterte and the 105 million Filipinos that you were working to get this illegal dumping issue settled. At a press conference, you stated that Canada “is working hard to resolve the issue” and “it is now [theoretically possible](#) to get it [the garbage] back.” Many in the Philippines welcomed your statement, which inspired hope that finally Canada would act responsibly and fulfill its obligations under the Basel Convention. But over 13 months later your pledge to take back Canada's garbage remains an unfulfilled promise.

Philippines government finds two-thirds of Canadian waste mis-declared

According to the waste analysis and characterization study conducted by the DENR in 2014, approximately 64 percent of the intercepted Canadian garbage shipments were “baled municipal solid waste or garbage destined for immediate local disposal and cannot be recycled.” In 2015, wastes from 26 of the 103 containers were illegally disposed of at a private landfill in Tarlac province angering officials and citizens.

Philippines government orders return of the waste to Canada

Your office might also be aware that in June 2016, Judge Tita Bughao-Alisuag of the Regional Trial Court of Manila (Branch 1) ordered the return of the garbage-filled containers covered by Criminal Case No. 143-11191 stressing that the Philippines is not a “trash bin” and that the dumping incident “should not be made a precedent for other countries to follow.” The EcoWaste Coalition is a “complainant-in-intervention”, together with other public interest groups, in the court case against the importer and customs broker for the botched garbage shipments.

South Korea provides a stark contrast to Canada

In contrast to Canada’s apparent disinterest in resolving this issue, South Korea has acted to address illegal waste shipments to the Philippines. On January 13, 2019, 51 containers of mis-declared and unsorted Korean garbage were sent back to South Korea with a promise from the Korean Ministry of Environment to promptly address the remaining 5,176 tons. These wastes were illegally exported from South Korea to the Philippines in 2018 and acted upon the same year. The stark contrast between South Korea’s actions and Canada’s indifference to its dumped waste has captured public attention and stoked anger at what is viewed as both disrespectful and illegal conduct by Canada.

Canada’s claims do not match its actions

The Canadian government publicly states that it fully complies with the Basel Convention claiming that, “As a Party Canada [actively implements](#) the prior-informed consent, classification and tracking, reporting and other obligations related to the transboundary movement of wastes as well as promotes the general obligations pertaining to waste minimization and management.” However, this statement is not true in the case of the Philippines waste dumping. Furthermore, we find Canada’s illegal dumping of wastes in the Philippines to be especially ironic considering that Canada itself has [served on the Basel Convention Implementation and Compliance Committee](#). A recent [study](#) using GPS devices found Canadian electronic waste illegally exported to Hong Kong and Pakistan in violation of the Basel Convention. To prevent future illegal dumping in any country, we call on Canada to ratify the [Basel Ban amendment](#).

Five years have lapsed and the Canadian garbage is still languishing in our land: 77 containers are sitting at the ports of Manila and Subic (wastes from the other 26 containers are already rotting at a local landfill).

The dumping of Canadian wastes in the Philippines is immoral and illegal. We respectfully request that the Canadian government provide a clear and definite date by which it will repatriate its garbage so that this protracted ordeal can finally be promptly ended.

We appeal to you to take just and expeditious action. We await your response with much hope.

Sincerely yours,



Aileen Lucero
National Coordinator
EcoWaste Coalition

Copy: Hon. Catherine McKenna <EC.MINISTRE-MINISTER.EC@CANADA.CA>