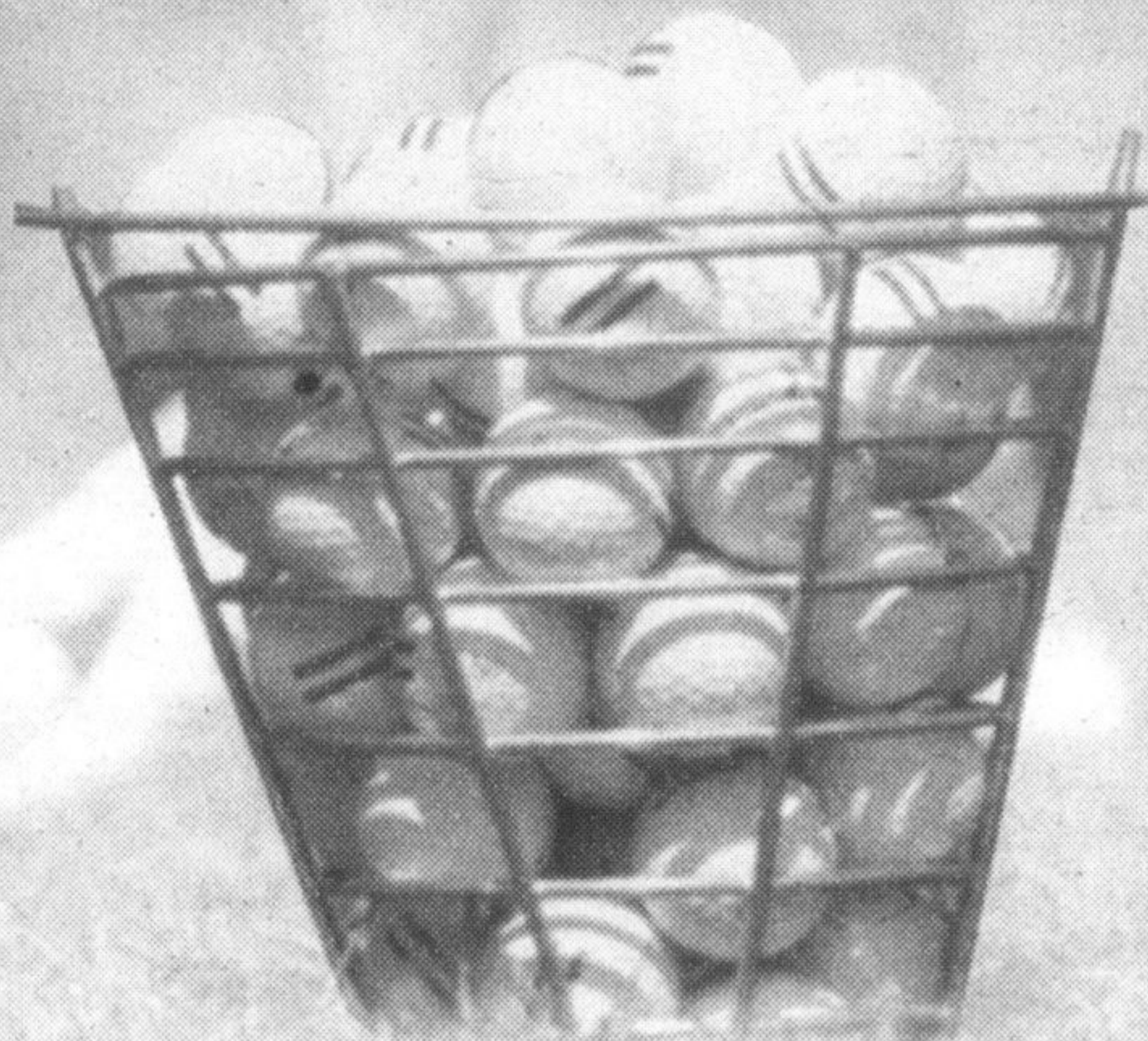


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Savoline looking to protect landfill site from T.O. trash

By **JASON MISNER**
The Champion

Halton Chair Joyce Savoline is scheduled to have a face-to-face meeting with Ontario's environment minister on Thursday to convince the Liberal government that Halton shouldn't become a dumping ground for Toronto's currently exported garbage.

Ms Savoline told *The Champion* Wednesday afternoon that she and Oakville Liberal MPP Kevin Flynn will meet with Minister Leona Dombrowsky for about an hour. The private meeting is expected to take place at Ms Dombrowsky's Toronto office.

Ms Savoline wouldn't divulge what specifically she will say to the minister, but will attempt to convey the message that Halton is doing all the right things to protect and extended its sole landfill site on Regional Road 25 in Milton. Accepting Toronto's garbage will jeopardize that, she said, and shorten the landfill's life expectancy to just two years.

"We have to work faster and harder with her ministry staff to work on options to help Toronto and other municipalities find their Plan B," she said, noting other southwestern Ontario municipalities are equally concerned. "Whatever comes out of the meeting I'll make public."

The process to choose a location for Halton's current landfill site was very contentious and divisive in the 1980s when Burlington's

landfill on North Service Road was tapped.

Originally expected to last 20 years, the Milton landfill's life expectancy has been extended to 40 years with room for about three million tonnes of garbage.

Toronto has been trucking more than one million tonnes of waste per year to a landfill in Michigan. As a result, there's been much trepidation among regional politicians that Halton may be tagged as a site — short- or long-term — for Toronto's waste because of its size and close proximity.

Toronto can store trash at its seven transfer stations but that would last only a day or a day-and-a-half. Politicians got particularly worried when the U.S. border closed for 19 hours one day last May because of the mad cow crisis, stranding trucks.

The minister's meeting was sparked by a March 24 letter she sent to Ms Savoline clearly stating her government can't promise to exclude Halton from being a possible landfill site to accept Toronto's garbage.

The Minister of the Environment has legislative emergency powers to force a landfill site to accept another municipality's waste.

"This power can only be exercised when it is necessary in the public interest and I can assure you that such power will not be taken lightly," Ms Dombrowsky wrote. "I hope Halton council will recognize that since the Ontario legislature has conferred this discretion

on the Minister of the Environment, it would be improper of me, as the current minister, to make any commitment that would fetter the exercise of that discretion."

Ms Savoline, who released the documentation publicly to fellow politicians and the media earlier this week, first sent a letter on January 21 to "request a letter of support" to ensure Halton won't be forced to accept garbage from GTA municipalities.

In that six-paragraph letter she pointed out that it cost the Region more than \$100 million to build the Regional Road 25 landfill site. That included the \$52 million to construct the site, the \$60.6 million to export waste to Niagara Falls, New York and St. Catharines for seven years and millions of dollars for environmental assessment hearings.

Ms Savoline responded to Ms Dombrowsky in a April 8 letter vaunting Halton's 40.9 per cent 2003 diversion rate, and conveying that authorizing Toronto's garbage to infiltrate Halton's landfill would be "disheartening".

She added she always writes to the new Environment Minister requesting Halton not be used a potential site for Toronto's garbage.

Mr. Flynn said he understands Toronto is able to meet the new laws.

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