



Inaction threatens health at Aamjiwnaang First Nation

Toronto, 7 Oct. 2014 – Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner says the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change must do more to resolve the health crisis at a First Nation community near Sarnia.

In his 2013/2014 Annual Report, *Managing New Challenges*, Gord Miller says the Aamjiwnaang First Nation receives millions of kilograms of air pollution from the nearby petrochemical complex known as “Chemical Valley.”

“This is a historic failure. Current land use rules would not allow such a concentration of industry so close to a residential community,” says the Commissioner. “The government’s existing approach to regulate pollution on a facility-by-facility basis makes this problem worse.”

In 2009, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change agreed to look into using pollution reduction plans for environmental hot spots, such as the Aamjiwnaang First Nation. The Ministry also said the review would look at the cumulative effects of air pollution from individual facilities. Five years later, the review still has not been completed. “While the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change drags its feet, the people of Aamjiwnaang are left to cope with pollution in their community.”

- A 2013 study found that mothers and children in Aamjiwnaang First Nation are exposed to a number of pollutants, including cadmium, mercury and PCBs.
- The incidence of cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses are higher in the region than elsewhere in Ontario.
- Following a chemical leak in January 2013, residents were told to stay indoors and seal their doors and windows. They later complained of headaches, nausea, dizziness and shortness of breath.

The Environmental Commissioner says the ministry must do much more to address the severity and persistence of the health threats to the Aamjiwnaang First Nation. “Such a situation would be intolerable for any community, but given the history of our treatment of First Nations, this case is truly shameful.”

The chapter “MOE Continues to Fail the Aamjiwnaang First Nation” is on page 114 of the report, *Managing New Challenges* which you can download at www.eco.on.ca.

Environmental
Commissioner
of Ontario



Commissaire à
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*The **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario** is the province's independent environmental watchdog. Appointed by the Legislative Assembly, the ECO monitors and reports on compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights, the government's progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and its actions towards achieving greater energy conservation in Ontario.*

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