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Changes sought

STIFFER POLLUTION RESTRICTIONS REQUESTED FOR INDUSTRIES

By CATHY DOBSON
The Observer

Ecojustice is taking formal action today on behalf of two Aamjiwnaang residents who say the province must change how local industries obtain permits to pollute.

The national environmental group wants reduced emissions in heavily industrialized areas such as Sarnia, Sudbury and Hamilton.

Currently, industries are assessed in isolation when they apply for permits, says Elaine MacDonald, a senior scientist with Ecojustice.

That just isn't good enough in areas where there are multiple industries emitting pollutants to the airshed, she said.

"We've got to take into account the accumulative effects of all the pollutants in the air before approving these permits. Apparently, the laws in Ontario really don't protect people who live in hotspots like Sarnia," said MacDonald.

If the accumulative impact of all area industry was considered, they would need to upgrade their technology to

lower emissions, she said.

Ecojustice is filing a formal application for review to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario under the Environmental Bill of Rights.

The commissioner is required to say whether a review will go ahead within 60 days.

"Generally, we're not terribly successful in getting a review done but I think we have a greater chance of success with this one," MacDonald said.

That's because the Ontario government has acknowledged that the accumulative effects of pollution should be considered.

"But there's no process in place to get it done," said Ecojustice lawyer Justin Duncan. "We're optimistic because we've already had discussions with the govern-

ment on this issue and they seem to recognize there's gaps in current pollution laws."

The application is being submitted on behalf of Ada Lockridge and Ron Plain, residents of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

"The amount of pollutants, the known carcinogens, the particulate matter, has never been looked at here," Plain said. "But we know it's having an impact on our health. I have young children and it scares the hell out of me."

While Ecojustice is acting on behalf of two First Nations residents emissions from Chemical Valley impact Corunna, Froomfield and south Sarnia, Plain said.

"How polluted can a community become before the government admits something is horribly wrong and changes the law to protect us?" Lockridge asked a written statement.

"Our water is polluted, our land is polluted and our air is polluted."

Other jurisdictions, including Alberta and several American states, already insist industry consider accumulative effects when applying for emission permits.

"Industry is already aware of these things," said MacDonald. "They have to adhere to them elsewhere. Ontario needs to catch up."



Lockridge



Plain