

Sarcee Asphalt Plant Update

The Final Environmental Screening Report (the Screening Report) from Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) on the environmental impacts of the Sarcee Asphalt Plant operated by Sarcee Gravel Products on the Tsuu T'ina Reserve is complete. According to INAC, the negative environmental impacts of the Asphalt Plant will be minimized provided Sarcee Gravel Products implements the numerous mitigation measures outlined in the Screening Report. In fact, the Screening Report states, "it is critical that all recommended mitigation measures be implemented".

The Screening Report recommends that the applied-for permit be issued and that the permit incorporate the mitigation measures identified by INAC, as well as compliance and enforcement terms and conditions. Once issued the permit will contain the requirements of the *Codes of Practice for Asphalt Paving Plants*.

The following is a summary of a few of the key elements and recommended mitigation measures in the Screening Report, that were of specific concern to the residents of Oakridge, and the surrounding communities of Lakeview, Palliser, Bayview, Pumphill, Braeside, Cedarbrae, Southwood, Woodbine, Woodlands and Haysboro.

Regarding the issue of air quality, while many community members have repeatedly lobbied INAC to compel this facility to switch from using waste oil to fuel its heater unit(s) to a cleaner fuel such as propane or natural gas, the Screening Report does not recommend the plant make this fuel switch.

In Sections 6.1 and 6.1M, Physical Environment Impacts and Mitigation Requirements and in Appendix A Public Participation, INAC acknowledges that "odour in [our] area[s] was reported as extremely strong and offensive," and as such has required that the plant shall be equipped with "pollution control technologies that meet the following requirements...[including] "emission from the asphalt plant shall not cause an offensive odour."

Further, in Sections 6.3M, Human Environmental Impacts Mitigation Requirements, INAC does make the suggestion that "in controlling the odour from the asphalt plant, the proponent will use cleaner fuels where possible..."

INAC did require the facility to "install and operate necessary and commercially available pollution control technologies to successfully mitigate offensive odours and emissions." Unfortunately, INAC suggested investigating "other options of odour control such as introducing odour neutralizers," which may result in "masking" emissions through the use of an "odour neutralizer", rather than an improvement to the fundamental operation of the facility and the surrounding air quality.

Finally, in Sections 9, Monitoring and Follow-Up and 10.0 Recommendations, respectively, INAC states that "if any public concern regarding this project is raised, these concerns should be addressed..." and that "the mitigation measures identified" in the screening, report be "incorporated into the...permit" and that "compliance and enforcement...be included in the permit."

The Screening Report may be viewed in its entirety on Calgary Clean Air's website at www.calgarycleanair.com.

Ultimately, while there is little debate among residents that the major contributing factor to offensive odour and other emissions from this particular facility is its use of "used/waste oil" as its fuel and that a switch to a cleaner fuel such as natural gas or propane would virtually eliminate the odour problem at this facility, and while INAC does not compel the Sarcee Asphalt Plant to switch to a cleaner burning fuel, we must view INAC's requirement that this plant not "cause an offensive odour", with healthy scepticism that the sources of the toxic fumes in our neighbourhoods will actually be mitigated. In fact, we should challenge INAC and the operators of the plant, Sarcee Gravel Products and Carmacks Enterprises, to implement the mitigation measures recommended in the Screening Report to ensure that the residents of Oakridge and the surrounding communities are not subject to another summer of offensive odours and negative health impacts.

The land tenure permit has not yet been issued, and it remains to be seen whether it will contain the recommended mitigation measures, and compliance and enforcement terms and conditions. If so, INAC should have a tool with which to enforce compliance, unlike the past two years where the Sarcee Asphalt plant operated under no apparent obligation to comply with any regulation, permit or condition.

In conclusion, it should be recognized that the public's concern has not gone unnoticed. In fact, public and Calgary Health Region concerns made a significant contribution to the Screening Report (see Screening Report: Appendix A). Furthermore, monitoring and follow-up are an integral part of the Screening Report, which concluded, "the site should be monitored by INAC to ensure that mitigation measures are implemented." This Screening Report is a positive first step towards improving our air quality. Going forward, residents must continue to be vigilant in monitoring their living environment, specifically the air quality and its impacts on health, and to report these exposures to the following:

INAC – Shannon Pagotto at pagottos@inac-ainc.gc.ca or (403) 292-5614
Minister, INAC, Jim Prentice – at prentice.j@parl.gc.ca or (403) 216-7777
Deputy Minister, INAC, Michael Wernick at wernickm@inac-ainc.gc.ca or (819) 997-0133

Prime Minister Steven Harper – Calgary@stephenharpermp.com or (403) 253-7990

Alberta Environment's Environmental Complaint Line – 1-800-222-6514

Calgary Health Region – Lisa Strosher at lisa.strosher@calgaryhealthregion.ca or (403) 943-8026

Sarcee Gravel Products, Sarcee Asphalt Plant Manager Kevin Wilson at (403) 251-0900; and

Ron Hystad, President of Carmacks at rhystad@carmacksent.com or (780) 955-5545.