

Watchdog corrects error in Norske pollution ranking

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The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy has corrected an error on its website which gave the impression that the NorskeCanada mill at Crofton is the fourth-worst polluter in Canada.

"That point was wrong," Norske Canada Crofton vice president Don McKendrick said Thursday. "We were in fact No. 43 as far as the emissions they reported on in the year 2002. This whole thing is based on the report up to 2002. Unfortunately, when data like this gets out, which I think was quite genuinely misread out of the report -- I don't think there was anything clandestine -- it gives the wrong perception out there in the public."

The report is put out by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, an organization that looks at emissions from industrial sources across North America, with input on Canadian data from Environment Canada.

"We report on an annual basis according to the criteria they dictate to us," McKendrick said. "That CEC report shows us with an increase from

the 2001 historical data to 2002. That puts Us No. 4 in terms of the size of the increase.

"They tell us compounds to report. These are ones that are of particular interest to the federal agency. In 1995, we only had to report on one compound, in 1998, there were two compounds, in 1999 it went to six, in 2000 it went to 11, in 2001 it went to 13 and in 2002 it went to 23.

"So, the real crux of this is, if you're asking in one year to report on 13 and the next year 23, your emissions will go up, based on the CEC document."

McKendrick said there are other things that pulp mills are not required to report to the agencies, notably total particulate. "They only go after the fine particulate and they do not require us to report total greenhouse gases nor total H₂S, which is part of the typical smell."

If it was all reported to the government, he said, it would show "our emissions are continuing to decrease in total."

Since 1990, he said, total particulate emissions have been reduced by 90 per cent, greenhouse gases by 72 per cent and the odourous emissions by 70 per cent.

Crofton Airshed Citizens Group spokesperson Michael Ableman said, "the national pollution report reinforces the fact that Norske needs to spend resources on cleaning up pollution, not on managing public opinion. People in this region are getting tired of lies and obfuscation. We want action."

According to Canada's National Pollution Release Inventory, he said, "each day approximately 24 million cubic metres of exhaust gases leave the Crofton mill," carrying tonnes of emissions that could be dangerous to health.

A visit to the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy website (www.cielap.org) shows that that group is concerned that governments are not the pollution watchdogs the public might fancy them to be.

"Pollution prevention planning should be a priority for governments, industries and citizens," said Anne Mitchell, Executive Director of CIELAP. "Although North America wide total releases and transfers of pollutants fell by seven per cent from 1998 to 2002, Canadian total releases and transfers increased by seven per cent for the same period; on-site air releases increased by 8 per cent.

There is a difference in U.S. and Canadian performance with respect to air pollution," said Mitchell. "We note with concern that while air

pollution has declined in the U.S. by 21 per cent, in Canada it has gone up by 8 per cent."