

# CROFTON AIRSHED CITIZENS GROUP

[www.croftonair.org](http://www.croftonair.org)

January, 2006

It's been two years since locals attended a NorskeCanada open house about a proposal to burn 'alternative fuels' at the Crofton mill. The event was the genesis of what has become the Crofton Airshed Citizens Group (CACG), a group of local residents with great concerns about the health and environmental impact of the mill's air emissions. Since then, the mill has faced an enormous public relations crisis. Musical giants Neil Young, Randy Bachman along with Tal Bachman and the Barenaked Ladies have contributed their time and talent to a concert in order to raise money for the local fight against the mill's toxic air emissions.

While NorskeCanada (now re-named Catalyst paper in a subsequent re-branding attempt) has backed off on their intentions to impose an additional toxic air load to locals with the burning of tires, railway ties and roofing shingles, they have yet to come clean with what is really being emitted from the mill currently. With known practices including the burning of demolition waste, salty hog fuel and toxic sludge from operations, there is every reason to believe that air emissions from the mill are posing a tremendous health risk.



## Corporate Name Change

When under public scrutiny, change your name! We are not sure if we can take credit for this, but NorskeCanada changed their name to **Catalyst Paper** as of October this year. Although NorskeCanada is no longer in use officially, it still shows up occasionally in materials.

## Alternative Fuels Trial Cancelled

The company has permanently shelved the plan to burn "Alternative Fuels" (tires, coal, and old railway ties) at the Crofton Mill. Thanks to everyone who came out to public meetings, wrote letters of protest, sent emails and made phone calls to the company and to government. Special thanks to the Clean Air Concert musicians — Randy Bachman, Tal Bachman, Neil Young, and the Barenaked Ladies. Your gracious support has made a huge impact.

## Odour Reduction

That rotten egg pulp mill smell comes from a group of toxic chemical compounds called Total Reduced Sulphur (TRS). As a result of public pressure, the company announced this spring an \$800 000 investment to capture some of the "fugitive" TRS emissions at the Crofton Mill. This is good news for workers and everyone who lives in the Crofton airshed. Even with improvements, however, the mill continues to emit a significant amount of TRS that no one should have to breathe on a regular basis. CACG will continue to demand reduced TRS emissions at the mill.

## Crofton Air Website

The Crofton Airshed Citizens Group has a website that is regularly updated with news articles, press releases and background documentation.

<http://www.croftonair.org>

## Permission to Pollute

Over the last two years, the ministry has been in the process of re-writing the air permit for the Crofton mill, providing concerned citizens with fuel for optimism. It was hoped that finally the government was going to live up to their responsibility to effectively regulate the air emissions from the mill.

Two thirds of all toxic release of the pulp and paper industry is emitted to the air according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, yet there are no Canadian provincial or federal regulations on toxic release to the air from pulp mills - simply guidelines and recommendations. It's up to the Ministry of Environment in BC to regulate through permits for each individual facility.

Unlimited amounts of hundreds of substances, including known carcinogens, are discharged every day from the Crofton mill into our common airshed. The permit effectively regulates only two substances - Total Reduced Sulphur Compounds (TRS) and Particulate Matter. Two substances!

A review of permits from other jurisdictions reveals a number of other standard substances and processes regulated in air permits for a pulp mill.

### **New Permit Drafted**

The draft for a re-written permit for the Crofton mill was recently obtained from the

Ministry of Environment. The draft permit made it clear that the provincial government was taking no steps to further regulate mill emissions. Instead a permit has been proposed that raises the allowable discharge of emissions for the mill and limits only the same two substances. While limits for particulate matter have dropped in the proposal to reflect updated equipment, there are no lower concentrations for TRS proposed and some limits in the current permit have

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disappeared altogether.



One welcome addition is a strict definition of 'wood waste', which would preclude the incineration of demolition waste in the power boilers – an historical practice of the mill resulting in highly toxic emissions. Apart from this, the proposal breaks no new ground into regulating the mill's emissions.

The public demands full information and reasonable limits on emissions of hazardous chemicals into their air. The government has a responsibility to protect the health of

the public and the environment.

### Proposed Permit in Brief:

- There is no mention of any other emissions than appear in the current permit.
- The maximum authorized rate of discharge for the pulp, newsprint machines, maintenance and labs has been removed.
- Despite persistent claims by the mill operators that sulphur compounds have been drastically reduced, TRS limits remain the same in every case in the proposed permit amendment.
- As with the current permit, there is no characterization of emissions from bleach/chemical plants *"Discharges are typical emissions from the bleaching of pulp and manufacture of bleaching chemicals"*.
- The proposed permit unconditionally permits sludge incineration. Alternatives exist
- The acceptable fuels in the power boilers must be strictly defined. Concerns remain about the salt content in salty hog fuel and the use of sludge as fuel.

Concerned Citizens demand a thorough review of mill operations resulting in an assessment report to be completed as soon as possible and distributed to stakeholders for information. Sufficient consultation with the public and stakeholders should be held. Currently there is no public consultation planned.

## Health Impacts – Still in the Dark

There were a lot of questions about the fuels trial that was proposed. Most fundamentally, people wondered how the trial could be measured for effect when there was no baseline study of current emissions or their impact on human health and the environment.

With people lining up at the mikes at public meetings to talk about the impacts they felt from the mill on their own health, their children's health, there was a general consensus that the mill was having a profound effect already – without any alternative fuels.

Thanks to Randy Bachman, Tal Bachman, Neil Young and the Barenaked Ladies who gave their music and their energy to the Clean Air Concert in the fall of 2004, the Crofton Airshed Citizens Group (CACG) was able to galvanize enough support to stop the alternative fuels trial and the company withdrew their permit application for the time being. Meanwhile NorskeCanada (now Catalyst Paper) hired consultants to provide them with a study in answer to the call for a baseline human health study of the mill.

Unfortunately, the consultants Jacques Whitford, produced a report that fell far short. A damning peer review report commissioned by CACG condemned the report as grossly

inadequate finding dozens of deficiencies ranging from the emissions inventory at the foundation of the study, to the lack of adherence to generally accepted risk assessment principals and guidelines.

Representatives for Catalyst consultant, told the May 19<sup>th</sup> Community Advisory Forum that it was never intended to be a baseline health risk assessment – despite the title of the report: ***"Baseline Air Quality Modelling and Human Health Risk Assessment of Current Day Emissions in NorskeCanada Crofton Division"***.

At the September 13<sup>th</sup> Community Advisory Forum meeting a recommendation was made that the air dispersion modeling study be redone and that a full baseline human health risk assessment of the Crofton mill be conducted.

The recommendation came after a review by a sub-committee comprised of representatives from the union, environment and First Nations sectors.

While the entire Forum has not accepted the recommendation, CACG will continue to press for a meaningful study to determine the health and environmental impact of the Crofton mill

## Cleaner Wood Waste

Wood waste is the main fuel used in Crofton's Power Boiler # 4. Unfortunately "wood waste" at Crofton includes salty bark and demolition waste. Both these materials release dioxins and other highly toxic materials into the atmosphere when burnt.

Since CACG began our investigations over the wood waste and discussions with the mill, a new permit for air emissions from the mill has been proposed (see Permit to Pollute on page 3).

The proposed new permit would not allow demolition waste to be burnt as it strictly defines 'wood waste' – a welcome improvement. More improvements are urgently needed, in fuel inputs, however, and CACG will continue to press for the use of cleaner wood waste including reduced salt content of hog fuel.

## Community Advisory Forum

CACG has been participating in the company-sponsored community advisory forum since last spring. The forum includes delegates from stakeholder groups including Environment, Health, Residents, Workers/Union, First Nations, Catalyst, and Local Government. The forum has recently struck sub-committees on pollution prevention and health risk.

## Leading the Pack in Pollution

Twice this year, Catalyst Paper mills have shown up in publications as being among the top polluters in the nation. In May, 2005 a report was issued by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) listing the Crofton Mill as showing the single largest increase in pollution release in the entire country between the years 1995-2002. In October, 2005 a British Columbia pollution overview issued by Environmental Defence and the Canadian Environmental Law Association named two of the mills run by Catalyst Paper as among the "Dirty Dozen" top air polluters for the province – Elk Falls and Crofton. Both reports were based on data provided by the company to Environment Canada. The data is available online to the public through the National Pollution Release Inventory at <http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/npri/>

## Toxic Sludge is Good for You

Sludge is the noxious residue from the pulp and paper making process. At Crofton, the sludge is burnt, which releases toxic products. The ash, which is also toxic, is stored in landfill sites. A new proposal from the provincial Ministry of Environment would allow the spreading of the toxic sludge on farmland and forest lands, including land in drinking watersheds. Whether burnt or spread, the toxic materials wind up in the environment, in our food and our drinking water. To see the intentions paper on the proposed regulations, go to:

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epdiv/ema\\_codes\\_of\\_practice/soil\\_enhance.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epdiv/ema_codes_of_practice/soil_enhance.html)

## Meanwhile, in other Catalyst Mills...

While active citizens in the Crofton Airshed have seen some of their concerns answered with the withdrawal of the permit application for alternative fuels, dialogue with stakeholders and investments into emission controls, the Catalyst Elk Falls facility in Campbell River was recently granted a permit allowing the burning of coal in the power boilers. Despite strenuous objections by local residents and First Nations, the permit was rushed through. The Catalyst Port Alberni mill continues to burn Tire-Derived Fuel - the practice that was ruled out in Crofton by the reaction of local citizens.

Vigilance is required by those concerned to make sure that the government fulfills its responsibility in regulating, and Catalyst fulfills its responsibilities to the environment and human health.

Voice your concerns

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