

Thurs. April 27/2006

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Spend money on an environmental plan

Sir: I'm somewhat puzzled by the "Public health study wanted" article (The Observer, April 19, 2006). A local industry lobby group, called the Sarnia Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA), wants the "federal government to launch a comprehensive public health study and put an end to what this group calls speculative media reports" that there are connections between local industry and the health of people in this area.

Below this article is one entitled, "Source of benzene spill sought," which details the "mystery" of this recently dis-

covered, cancer causing chemical on Suncor property adjacent to Sarnia's Aamjiwaang First Nation community. No speculation here and does anyone really think this is good for anyone's health?

Is it also speculation when the Ontario Medical Association places Lambton County at the top of the list of mortality rates attributable to air pollution; or the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences places Essex-Lambton-Kent at the second highest rate of asthma hospitalization for children age zero to nine; or Environment Canada reports the Sar-

nia region as exceeding the Canada-wide standard for particulate and ozone?

Based on this information, I wonder what SLEA's real motivation is in calling for a health study and especially one they would be willing to help finance.

Everyone recognizes the environmental track record of local industry to be very spotty. Yes, there have been some successes but there are a lot of failures to more than offset those successes.

Public health studies have been called for locally before but never acted on by any

level of government. The most recent one that sticks out in my mind was the call by MPP Caroline Di Cocco for a public health study to look at the health impact of the then Safety-Kleen (a member of SLEA) operation in St. Clair Township. That request wasn't supported by the company or Lambton County and St. Clair Township councils.

But now that MPP Di Cocco is part of the Liberal government, her calls for this public health study have seemingly disappeared. The now Clean Harbors incinerator continues to burn toxic, hazardous

waste, using emission standards that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario tells us are not as stringent as those in the United States. And hundreds of thousands of tons of untreated hazardous waste are buried at that Clean Harbors location forever.

It's quite clear to many of us that air and water pollution is the cause of many health-related problems in this area. Local industries are large contributors to increasing levels of pollution, but not the only ones. There is plenty of evidence around as shown above that clearly indicates much more

has to be done by all who contribute to Sarnia-Lambton's environmental problems.

If we are ever going to improve this area's image and reduce the health hazards and lifestyle restrictions posed by local pollution, then a co-ordinated environmental improvement plan needs to be developed by all stakeholders. Rather than spending money on a narrow based health study, spend it on developing and implementing such a plan.

Robert Swift
Point Edward

Dispose of dog droppings properly

Sir: I had the privilege of doing my part in the cleanup along Howard Watson Trail on on April 23. I say "my part" because, although I try not to litter, I would be hypocritical denying ever having done so in the past.

As a dog owner, I also appreciate the love and dedication it takes to

Start negotiating with natives

Sir: Canada has been around too long to still be at war with our natives.

When the British and French first inhabited Canada, yes, the natives were already here and it was their land, so to speak. Canada is a big country and the British and French travelled here through exploration, just like the original natives did. History shows that natives migrated here through the Bering Strait passage between Alaska and Siberia. So who says they own the land?

No matter how you look at

it, years have passed and agreements were made — agreements by the ancestors of today's Canadian natives. But I recently read a posting on a message board by a native Canadian from the Mohawk Tribe who claims that the agreements the natives from the East made do not cover all tribes and provinces.

Well then, maybe what is necessary is that someone pulls out ALL agreements made for each tribe since Canada became a country and let the chief from each tribe through-

out Canada sit down with our government and come up with one final agreement never to be changed again and stop the violence.

Violence gets you nowhere but buried six feet under and often times it is the innocent that suffer.

Go to war with Canada then, and we will win this country fair and square and then you will have nothing.

I am disgusted with both the natives for continually taking and complaining and creating the violence by protesting

with weapons and inviting the violence that inevitably occurs, and with our government for not doing anything about it.

The government needs to stop ignoring the requests of our natives and start negotiating. Come to a collective agreement and put this to rest forever. We need to remain strong and united if we want to remain the peaceful country we have been known for.

Denise Stafford
Sarnia