



Sudbury Soils Study | **Étude des sols sudburois**

metals • health • environment
métaux • santé • environnement



Public Open House Summary Report

July 2003

Inco Limited ▪ Falconbridge Limited ▪ Ministry of the Environment ▪ Sudbury & District Health Unit ▪ City of Greater Sudbury ▪ Health Canada
Inco Ltée ▪ Falconbridge Ltée ▪ Ministère de l'Environnement ▪ Service de santé publique de Sudbury ▪ Ville du Grand Sudbury ▪ Santé Canada

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1) Background

The second Public Open House for the Sudbury Soils Study was held on June 11, 2003, from 3PM to 9PM, in the Inco Cavern at Science North.

To ensure maximum attendance at this open house, invitations to the public were published in local newspapers, invitation letters were mailed to a list of about 400 individuals and organizations in the Greater Sudbury Area, and press releases were distributed to generate newspaper articles and radio coverage.

A total of 68 Sudbury residents attended the open house. They were provided an opportunity to meet with members of the SARA (Sudbury Area Risk Assessment) Group and the Technical Committee for the study, and ask them questions about specific aspects of the study. Display boards at the open house also provided information on the study, and the results of our Have Your Say workshops, held in May.

Discussion about aspects of the study continued throughout the day, between members of the public and the study team. Attendees were also asked to complete an exit questionnaire if there were any unanswered questions, or if they had any specific concerns they would like to see addressed throughout the study.

2) Summary of Results

The majority of attendees had their questions addressed by study team members during the meeting, and did not complete exit questionnaires. The 16 questionnaires that were received provided very detailed questions and comments, which will contribute to the study process, and to shaping the consultation process to better serve the community, and the study itself. Participants were very clear in their desire for the study to address the potential impacts of metals in the soils on the environment and human health, particularly in garden vegetables and water. Health and environmental concerns are important to participants, and will continue to be addressed throughout the study.

A number of attendees also expressed concerns about the participation of Inco and Falconbridge on the Technical Committee, and the potential for conflict of interest for the companies. These concerns have resulted in the study team providing clearer information, in local papers, and on the project website, of how the Technical Committee operates, and the role that the companies share with the other members of the committee.

In addition to the detailed input, we received six primary messages from participants:

- 1) We are concerned about our health, especially the health of our children;
- 2) We are concerned about the potential for increased exposure to metals from eating garden vegetables;
- 3) We are concerned about the health of our recovering ecosystem;
- 4) We are concerned about the complexity of the risk assessment process and the possibility it will lead to inconclusive results;
- 5) We want additional information and clarification about how the study process works, and the role of various groups on the Technical Committee; and,
- 6) We want additional opportunities to hear directly from the researchers as the study progresses.

3) Impact on Sudbury Soils Study Project Design

This input is now helping focus the Sudbury Soils Study's Technical Committee's management of study design and reporting, and the SARA Group's study plan and approach. In particular:

- 1) We will pay special attention to the health of children;
- 2) We are undertaking a vegetable garden survey involving more than 60 Sudbury area residences, to examine metal levels in garden produce;
- 3) We will look closely at biodiversity and links between recovering ecosystems and metals
- 4) We will endeavour to communicate results clearly and professionally, in a manner that is easily understood;
- 5) We will conduct the Sudbury Soils Study in a transparent manner that assures community members that the results will be conclusive ; and,
- 6) We will make an increased effort to provide additional opportunities for public workshops and information sessions.

Public input from the open house and our Have Your Say workshops on areas that should receive special attention in the Sudbury Soils Study will frame many of the study activities. We also received a good deal of input to assist with the design of a vegetable garden survey. We will make specific reference to this input in future reports.

4) Impact on Sudbury Soils Study Public Consultation Process

We received a good deal of input to assist with the design of the future consultation program for the study. Those of you who completed questionnaires commented that not enough information was presented at this early meeting, and that more maps and details of the study process should be presented at future meetings. Future open houses will have results drawn from various aspects of the study, and we will work to address your requests for display panels with more information.

Some of you also recommended that a presentation be part of future open houses, and that information be provided in both official languages. One attendee stated that the study team

should not downplay the results of this study, even if metal levels are low. We will continue to provide accurate information and conclusions throughout the study. Your input will also help us shape our future consultation efforts, through our open houses, workshops, newsletters, and our project website.

5) Conclusion

As a vehicle to obtain detailed and comprehensive public input for the Sudbury Soils Study, the public open house was very successful. Information provided by attendees will help to shape the study, and how we present results to members of the Sudbury public. We wish to thank everyone who participated for their time and input. Based on the success of this open house, we will continue to hold community-based public meetings as the study progresses.

Sudbury Soils Study

Public Open House Questionnaire

June 11, 2003

SUMMARY

Number of attendees: 68

Number of questionnaires completed: 17

1. Please describe your interest in this project (check one).
 - a) Property Owner **6**
 - b) Interested Citizen **8**
 - c) Government Official
 - d) Public Interest Group (please specify name)
 - **farmers**
 - **Northwatch member**
 - e) Other (please specify)
 - **geologist/environmentalist**
 - **farm field sales agronomist; Bishops Seeds**
 - **SAQI (Sudbury Air Quality Initiative) – sat in on meetings**

2. How did you find out about tonight's open house?

Letter	6		
		Newspaper	8

Other (please specify)

 - **already contacted by phone, and through executive meeting of the Sudbury Horticultural Society**
 - **Radio – CBC**
 - **At Coniston meeting**
 - **Word of mouth**
 - **Out for a walk**

3. Do you have any particular issues or concerns about this study (please specify)?
 - **Biochemical analysis – focus specifically on short-range animals: worms, field mice, etc. Forget the bears, blue heron, geese, etc., which are highly mobile.**
 - **Calcium depletion as it pertains to nickel uptake in farm crops**
 - **I want to know about safety of foods from my garden and risks from airborne pollutants.**
 - **I would like to find out if my soil is safe to grow and eat the vegetables and fruit that I grow.**

- Interested in the status of my local and regional environment, and any potential health risks, environmental impacts, etc.
 - Are they going to test the people in Falconbridge for Arsenic? When?
 - General knowledge.
 - Health – respiratory concerns, asthma (environmental), interested in increase in particular – asthma in the community is about 13,000 individuals. This exposure to sulphur dioxide is dangerous for any life
 - The study is funded and controlled by the major polluters
 - As others have voiced, we too wonder about the participation, at this point in the process, of Inco and Falconbridge, the main polluters in this region.
 - What, if any, impact does the processing of nickel have on the environment, and our health?
 - That it is in part funded by Inco and Falconbridge and that members (employees) of these companies who are involved may have conflict of interest issues
4. Considering the human health and ecological risk assessments proposed by the SARA Group, are you aware of any information that is missing about special, unique or sensitive features? If yes, what are they?
- Are the nickel and other metals accumulating in crops? – If so, is it being retained in meats and milk?
 - I have some technical questions relating to how potential toxicity will be studied or evaluated (especially interaction effects).
 - No.
 - The soil on hillsides was washed away 50 years ago – are the soil deposits from the floods half a century ago showing different contaminants through the various layers?
 - Is the occurrence of immune system-related illness being considered?
 - Recent initiatives of mining operations dealing in recycling and waste management and disposal (e.g., Shell Canada waste spread on Falconbridge tailings, among others). Inco is burning toxic waste substances previously banned under other political jurisdictions.
 - Possibly – ground birds such as sparrows
 - See No. 3 (The study is funded and controlled by the major polluters); what about nickel carbonyl?
5. Do you agree with the study process for the risk assessments? Are there other criteria you would like to see considered?
- Comparison/control areas (i.e., Sault, North Bay)
 - Yes
 - Effects of weather, global warming, etc. on uptake of pollutants in the soil.
 - I agree with the study.
 - Yes

- **Some have complained about the participation of industry in the study. Despite them, I believe their participation should be welcomed. This process is open to the public, and I'm not a believer in any conspiracy theories or perceived conflicts of interest.**
- **Test the people!**
- **Some of the controversy about the Technical Committee could be avoided by a clear explanation about the way it functions.**
- **Effects of sulphur dioxide (smelter downdraft, see No. 3) are 65% above the measurable effects.**
- **Until the process is rid of industrial bias, concerns cannot be dealt with properly.**
- **The arsenic found so far is said not to have 'immediate' effects – please do not downplay final results, even if lower than could be – long term effects always seem to prove detrimental.**
- **In final analysis, please promote organic gardening, fully explaining benefits**