

Independent Process Observer



Sudbury Soils Study | Étude des sols sudburois
metals • health • environment
métaux • santé • environnement

Quarterly Report

REPORT #20

Summer 2007 (April – June)

By Franco Mariotti

Five years and six months ago, I assumed my role as the Independent Process Observer for the Sudbury Soils Study.

There have been delays in the release of the Human Health Risk Assessment. Some concern in this delay has been expressed in the media as well as individuals who have approached me as to why this delay is occurring.

The good news is that the release of the Human Health Risk Assessment to the public is imminent. A date will be announced soon for its public release perhaps even before this report comes to print.

Independent Process Observer reports are divided into two sections. The first section, **Past Issues and Recommendations**, is intended to be an update on matters discussed in my previous report (#19). The second section, **Current Issues and Recommendations**, deals with any new issues that have arisen since my last report.

PAST ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS

Two issues stand out from past Process Observer reports:

1. **ISSUE:** Early in the Sudbury Soils Study a commitment was made by Technical Committee members that all of the data from the Sudbury Soils Study will belong to the public. This issue has been raised in the past but as yet not been resolved. Where is the Sudbury Soils Study data going to be housed?

RECOMMENDATION: It would be advantageous to the public and to future scientific researchers that an announcement identifying the location of the Sudbury Soils Study data be made at the time the public open houses are to be held for the Human Health Risk Assessment and Ecological Risk Assessment results.

The process observer for the Sudbury Soils Study is independent of any organization or group involved in the study. He is impartial and his role is to advise on matters related to the study's Human Health Risk Assessment and Ecological Risk Assessment processes, both of which are managed by the study's Technical Committee with input from the Public Advisory Committee. As the observer, Franco Mariotti is required to report to the public on the study process four times each year.

2. ISSUE: Members of the Public Advisory requested from Health Canada a clarification of their role in the Sudbury Soils Study.

RECOMMENDATION: Once and for all the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch should clarify, through an official letter, exactly what their stance is on the draft Human Health Risk Assessment and draft Ecological Risk Assessment reports to date.

CURRENT ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS

The media and some members of the public have been raising concerns as to why Technical Committee meetings have been cancelled and why they have not heard the results of the Human Health Risk Assessment.

These are very legitimate concerns and as the Independent Process Observer representing the public and the environment it behooves me to comment on these delays.

Technical Committee meetings have been cancelled **but** there have been 'special' technical sessions occurring with all members of the Technical Committee present. I have been present at all these meetings. These meetings have been focused in scope and dealing with issues that require a resolution and consensus to proceed.

I will not be commenting on what the discussions have been about. My role as Independent Process Observer is to comment on the 'process' of the study not the 'science' or its results.

By reading any of my previous reports you will note that my approach has been to comment on decisions taken or not taken by the Technical Committee. My role at meetings has been to comment on those outcomes rather than reporting on what was said and by whom. It is abundantly clear to me that what was said and by whom during discussions of key decisions are irrelevant and distracting to the outcome of this significant study. What is really important here are the actual final decisions that directly influence public and environmental health.

It is crucially important to realize that all major decisions made by the Sudbury Soils Study over the past five years have been achieved by unanimous consensus by all the Technical Committee members. Some decisions have taken longer to reach unanimity than others, but in the end it was always attained.

Furthermore, it is important for the public to understand that I have always treated my role as the eyes and ears of an 'independent observer'. I have been especially conscious of keeping an eye on any decisions or dealings that may have tried to circumvent the Technical Committee decision process. I have not witnessed any decisions that have been made without having been through the Technical Committee consensus process.

For your information, a date for the release of the Human Health Risk Assessment is imminent.

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULES

Technical Committee Meetings for 2007

Date	Location
August 16	Xstrata Nickel Engineering Rooms A & B
September 13	Venue to be determined
October 11	Venue to be determined
November 8	Venue to be determined
December 13	Venue to be determined

Public Advisory Committee Meetings for 2007

Date	Location
September 18	Tom Davies Square, Room C10
November 20	Tom Davies Square, Room C10

(Note: Dates and locations may change. Refer to the SSS website or local newspapers for current information closer to the date.)

If you have any questions regarding the Sudbury Soils Study or this report please contact our toll free number: 1(866) 315-0228 or e-mail: questions@sudburysoilsstudy.com