

# Independent Process Observer



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

## Quarterly Report

### REPORT # 10

WINTER 2004 (October, November, December)

by Franco Mariotti

It has been three years since I assumed my role as the Independent Process Observer for the Sudbury Soils Study (SSS). The scientific research being done by the SARA Group for the SSS is nearing completion and many Sudburians are anxiously awaiting the results. In my opinion, involvement, participation and interest in the SSS from the general public have been poor. Although everyone is awaiting the outcome, there are still some issues that need to be considered.

#### ***PAST ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS***

**1. ISSUE: The protocol allowing members of the public to present at the Public Advisory (PAC) and Technical Committee (TC) meetings should be posted on the SSS website.**

TC RESPONSE: The protocol is now posted on the SSS website ([www.sudburysoilsstudy.com](http://www.sudburysoilsstudy.com)) under the heading of *Public Advisory Committee*. Once there, click on *meetings* where the protocol outlining how to get onto the agenda of future PAC or TC meetings can be found.

**2. ISSUE: Members of the public have not presented at a Technical Committee meeting for over eight months. Is it because TC meetings are held during the day?**

BACKGROUND: In my last report, I requested that the TC hold some of their meetings (every other one) at a later time in the day. This request is a reflection of my view as well as that of the PAC. It was hoped that this would allow members of the public who work during the day to attend the Open Session of the TC meeting without sacrificing time from work.

TC RESPONSE: The TC felt that if any member of the public wished to address the TC at one of their meetings, they would accommodate that request and meet at a time that would make this possible.

COMMENT: Although the TC's solution appears to be a favorable one, it has never been advertised, so the public is currently unaware of this new policy.

RECOMMENDATION: The TC should advertise their willingness to accommodate an individual's request to speak at their meeting. This should be done on the SSS website as soon as possible.

**3. ISSUE: In my PO Report #8 I expressed concern that Health Canada's representative at TC meetings was not always present. As a result I asked the TC to clarify Health Canada's role as a member of the TC.**

RESULT: This issue is still outstanding but will be raised at the next TC meeting in February

## **CURRENT ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. ISSUE: Members of the PAC requested that the minutes of the TC meetings be placed on the SSS website once they are approved.**

TC RESPONSE: The TC turned down this request providing two reasons for doing so. First, TC meeting minutes are delivered to PAC members at PAC meetings and so become public documents. Secondly, TC members felt that since the minutes of TC meetings simply record topics discussed and decisions made, such minutes could be misconstrued by individuals who had not attended the meeting and participated in the full discussion.

COMMENT: The TC may have some validity in their belief that people who do not attend TC meetings may misunderstand the intent of the minutes. However, I do believe this to be a minor factor and if the TC were to post their minutes on the website, it would reflect the SSS's fair and open process in a positive way.

RECOMMENDATION: I urge the TC to reconsider their decision and to post the minutes of TC meetings on the SSS website.

**2. ISSUE: Has the TC chosen an independent International Expert Review Panel (IERP) to review the final SSS findings?**

COMMENT: The TC has always recognized that an Independent Expert Review Panel must be chosen to review the results of the SSS. Members of IERP would be independent of the SSS and recognized internationally as specialists in Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) and Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA).

The objectives of the IERP are to comment on the quality of the science undertaken in the SSS, as well as to identify any shortcomings and strengths of the final report. It is important to note that if any shortcomings are identified, it is quite possible that further scientific analysis may be undertaken as part of the SSS. In order to assemble the IERP team and to maintain an arm's length approach, the TC needed to find a company or group to act as a broker. It is the job of this broker to find scientific specialists in the HHRA or ERA field that would qualify as IERP members.

RESULT: I am happy to announce that the TC, along with two members of the PAC, has chosen a broker from three possible candidates. An American group located in Ohio, Toxicological Excellence for Risk Assessment, (otherwise known as the TERA Group), is the successful candidate. They will be visiting Sudbury sometime in April. The PAC will be invited to meet members of the TERA Group.

**3. ISSUE: A public opinion poll was undertaken by the SSS Communications Sub-Committee to try to determine the capacity of Sudburians' understanding of the SSS.**

COMMENT: The results of this survey are important in many ways and it would be particularly interesting for members of the public to be aware of how this study is viewed by their fellow Sudburians.

RECOMMENDATION: The TC should post the results of this poll on the SSS website.

**4. ISSUE: Dr. Chris Wren from the SARA Group has been an articulate spokesperson for the SSS. As the scientific component of the SSS is coming to completion with results to be reviewed by early summer, Dr. Wren has stated that he needs to devote more time to scientific and technical direction of the study, and will have to reduce time spent on spokesperson duties for the next few months.**

COMMENT: This is unfortunate because as the results of the SSS are nearing completion, the demand for presentations by public groups will likely increase. However, members of the SSS Technical Committee have come forward to offer assistance in giving presentations to interested groups in the coming months.

RECOMMENDATION: I encourage the TC to select a spokesperson to accompany Dr. Wren as soon as possible. There is great value in ongoing dialogue and education with the public regarding the SSS and this should continue until the study is complete.

**5. ISSUE: How will the PAC be utilized by the TC as the SSS nears completion?**

COMMENT: In the past eight months, the PAC has experienced revitalization with an increased membership that is more outspoken at PAC meetings. However, their role during this time period has been primarily to educate themselves on the science of the SSS. Few major decisions made by the TC have come to them for comment. This is due in part, and through no fault of the TC, to the fact that the PAC had been meeting once every two months and so many TC decisions were made quickly to ensure timely results. In December 2004 the PAC decided to meet every month (one month in closed session and the other with a public session). This increased meeting frequency will allow PAC members to respond more promptly to TC decisions and issues. As the SSS nears completion, it is absolutely crucial that the PAC's advice be sought. They are a reflection of the Sudbury community and act as an important conduit for the public-at-large.

RECOMMENDATION: The TC and the PAC should meet to discuss how the PAC can be better utilized in this last crucial stage of the SSS.

**6. ISSUE: The SSS Timeline for Completion**

COMMENT: The date for completion of the SSS has changed several times over the past three years. In my opinion, this has not been intentional. Rather because the SSS is different from other HHRA and ERA studies, it had to be restructured to truly reflect the nature of the Sudbury environment and what needs to be accomplished. I honestly feel that every member of the TC wants this study done properly the first time. Therefore, in my opinion, the delays are justified.

RESULT: The timelines as discussed by the TC are:

- Mid/Late Fall 2005 - The SARA Group provides a draft to the TC
- Mid Winter 2005- The TC passes the draft on to the International Expert Review Panel (IERP)
- Two to four months later - The IERP provides their comments. (If the IERP recommends that other scientific studies be done, then this would delay the final report to the public.)
- Spring 2006 - The very earliest the public may expect to see a final SSS Report

**UPCOMING 2005 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AND PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

**TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

March 10  
April 14  
May 19  
June 23  
July 21

**PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

March 10  
May 17  
July 19  
September 20  
November 15