

Sudbury Soils Study could be delayed

By Carol Mulligan
THE SUDBURY STAR

The Sudbury Soils Study is in danger of getting "bogged down" and not being completed on schedule, says its director.

The three-year, \$5-million study of the levels of metal contamination in Sudbury soils, their impact on human and environmental health and the ways to remediate soils is due to report its findings in the summer or fall of 2005.

Chris Wren said it's getting to be a "real concern" that the study might not be completed on time.

If it is delayed, the cost of the study will increase and the credibility of the study will suffer, he told the study's technical committee this week.

The study, which is being conducted by Sudbury Area Risk Assessment (SARA), involves the work of dozens of people that all must be co-ordinated.

There are six partners in the study — Falconbridge and Inco Ltd., the Ministry of the Environment, the Sudbury and District Health Unit, the City of Greater Sudbury and Health Canada.

Personnel from Laurentian University are also conducting research.

Every delay in the submission of reports by anyone involved in the

study slows down the process, Wren said.

A delay of three months would necessitate the Sudbury Soils Study publishing another of its quarterly newsletters.

A four- to six-month delay would mean another open house would have to be held.

Wren said he wasn't pointing a finger at anyone, but he urged those involved in the study to submit reports on time.

The study is soon to move on the human health risk assessment (HHRA) portion, perhaps the most important work of the study.

Wren said the HHRA methodology "has got to be done quickly ... We have to get on with some decisions."

Results of the vegetable garden survey related to the Sudbury Soils Study should be forwarded soon to those who took part in it.

Study director Chris Wren said the SARA Group, which is conducting the study, made a commitment to participants in the vegetable garden survey, to inform them of results before the next growing season.

The results will be made available to the general public at a later date.

A package of material containing information on the toxicology of so-called metals of concern or toxic metals has been sent to about 350

SOIL SAMPLES

As well as analysing the results of 12,000 soil samples from 700 sites in the Greater Sudbury area, the Sudbury Soils Study is looking at:

- Hundreds of vegetable and soil samples from almost 70 home gardens;
- Blueberries, wild mushrooms and local produce;
- More than 200 fish from several lakes;
- More than 500 samples of vegetation and soils from 17 wildlife areas; More than 600 samples of air from 10 sites;
- Samples of water from wells and municipal drinking water sources; and more.

— Source: Sudbury Soils Study

physicians in Greater Sudbury and beyond.

The kit contains information on nickel, copper, arsenic and other metals.

The mailout is part of efforts to keep doctors up to speed on the symptoms related to exposure to these metals.

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Sudbury Soils Study director Chris Wren said it's important for the study to "maintain a public profile" in the community to ensure that the study is transparent.

"We need to take advantage of every opportunity we can" to provide information about the study, said Wren.