

EM9355: The Hamilton Spectator, November 3, 1993, page B4

Neighbours perplexed by study

By MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Special to The Spectator

OAKVILLE – Residents near Petro-Canada's Bronte refinery say they can't understand how a study could have failed to link odours from the company's operations to the many medical problems they say they are suffering.

"As soon as you open the door it hits you like a brick wall," Susan Graham, a resident in a Halton Housing Authority complex near the site, said in front of 100 residents and Petro-Canada employees at a public meeting last night.

She was among several residents to vent their continued frustration at the company's odour abatement plan, which they say isn't working.

They also were angry at a study of health complaints conducted by Dr. Doug Sider, an

affiliate of McMaster University's Institute of Environment and Health.

Dr. Sider said his study of 390 families living in three zones around the refinery found a high incidence of reported health and lifestyle problems attributed to the refinery's odours.

It also found that residents in one area who have fewer economic opportunities to leave were 1.5 to three times more likely to complain of problems such as coughing, sore throats and nausea.

The study recommended some improvements in a continued abatement and community monitoring program.

But it could find no cause-effect link.

He said finding a link is difficult because the study depended on reported problems rather than medical records.

Jim Doherty, who lives on the Burlington

side of Burloak Drive, didn't buy that.

"I used to see maybe a few people with puffers (inhalers). But in the past eight years more kids are using these things than they should," said Mr. Doherty, who also lives in the nearby Halton Housing project.

"I get headaches and I have to help a woman feed her kids when her headaches get too bad for her."

Renate Bekkers, of Tansley Drive, wanted to know if more valves at the refinery are opened at night.

"That's when I get sick to my stomach," she said.

Petro-Canada spokesman Bob Gillespie said "we'd be crazy to operate that way. We'd be likely to anger more people at night when they're at home from work."

The article EM9355 reprinted above is used in Chapter 11 of the STAT 231 Course Materials.