Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion & Protection

Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health

Regional Medical Officer of Health
Response to Environmental Impact Statement

Remediation of Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Oven Sites

May 5, 2006
Outline

- Context
- Authority
- Partnership with others
- Independence
- Air monitoring
- Recommendations
- Summary
Context

What is Public Health?

The science and art of promoting health, preventing disease, prolonging life and improving quality of life through the organized efforts of society.

It combines sciences, skills and beliefs directed to the maintenance and improvement of the health of all people through collective action.

The programs, services, and institutions involved tend to emphasize two things,

- The prevention of disease and
- The health needs of the population as a whole
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Context

Public Health – Core Functions include

- Population health assessment
- Health surveillance
- Health promotion
- Healthy activity
- Disease and injury prevention
- Health protection

Reflected in the structure of NS HPP
Authority

- *Health Protection Act* and *Health Hazards Regulations*
- Ability to act to protect and reduce the risk to the public health
- CMOH and MOHs accountable to Minister of HPP
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- Authority
  - Shall develop surveillance plans for
    - communicable diseases
    - notifiable diseases
    - dangerous diseases
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- **Authority**
  - Shall develop communication plans and protocols responding to
    - health hazards
    - notifiable diseases
    - communicable diseases
    - public health emergencies
Authority – Health Hazards

CMOH and MOH may

- Conduct risk assessments
- Monitor or audit potential or existing
- Make any order necessary to
  - Prevent
  - Remedy
  - Mitigate
Partnership with Others

Access to expertise and resources in governments and academia to

- Collect information and data
- Analyze
- Formulate
- Act
- Collaborate
- Consult
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- Partnership with Others
  - Partners include
    - Federal government departments and agencies
      - Health Canada
      - Public Health Agency of Canada
      - Environment Canada
      - Department of Fisheries & Oceans
      - Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Partnership with Others

Partners include

- Provincial government departments and agencies
  - NS Environment & Labour
  - NS Dept of Health
  - NS Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture
Partnership with Others

Partners include

- Other government departments and agencies
  - Cape Breton Regional Municipality
  - Sydney Tar Ponds Agency
  - Cape Breton District Health Authority

- Academic partners
  - Dalhousie University
  - Cape Breton University
Independence – OCMOH & Reg. MOH

By legislative design
- *Health Protection Act* and *Regulations*
- Ability to act
- Through permitting process of NSEL

By historical record
- Independent and neutral
- Recognized Canadian model
Air Monitoring Programs

Key Components

- A targeted, acute and long-term program focused upon health related discharges
- An open and transparent process for reporting air quality
  - Developed by stakeholders
  - Report to community, MOH
  - Include summary statistics
  - Current and cumulative values
  - Health impact interpretations
Air Monitoring Programs

Key Components

- Quality assurance program which monitors the sensitivity and specificity of the air monitoring program
- A communications plan which incorporates the views/comments of regional MOH regarding health impacts
Recommendations

1. Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the regional MOH will support the clean-up process.

2. Clean-up must address the long-term socioeconomic benefits which will improve the health status of all residents.
Recommendations

3. **A caution:**

An unplanned incident at the incineration site, during startup or operation, might derail the entire clean-up process. The psychological and potential adverse health effects of such an incident should not be underestimated.
Summary

- Public Health focuses upon
  - the prevention of disease within the population

- MOH and CMOH has
  - duties and responsibilities to
    - Observe
    - Analyze
    - Prevent, remedy and/or mitigate
Summary

- MOH and CMOH has
  - Partnerships with others
    - To consult and to contribute
  - Independence
    - To act and report
Summary

- MOH and CMOH supports the proposal and the EIS, but
  - Air monitoring program necessary for surveillance
  - Clean-up must address long-term socio-economic needs
  - Concerns about the socio-psychological and health impacts of an unplanned incinerator incident
Thank You