

More Work to Be Done on Air Quality

Report on Consultation on New Brunswick's proposed Implementation Plan for the Canada-wide Standards for Particulate Matter and Ozone

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On July 3, 2008, the provincial government held a consultation session on New Brunswick's draft plan to meet the Canada-wide standards for particulate matter (PM) and ozone by 2010. The aspect of the consultation session that I found most interesting was the emphasis that was placed on climate change and on transportation emissions. It is clear that the Department of Environment recognizes that many of the same emission sources that contribute to PM and ozone formation also emit greenhouse gases.

PM and ozone are two of the main constituents of smog and have been shown to have significant health and environmental effects. Based on current legislation and industry initiatives already in place, it looks like New Brunswick will be able to achieve the standards in advance of the 2010 deadline. This means that the New Brunswick plan doesn't propose any new programs or reductions; it just relies on those already in existence. However, levels of PM and ozone below the Canada-wide standards still affect health, so more work needs to be done.

Although this meeting was billed as a "consultation," government representatives presented for almost three hours, which only left 15 minutes for comments and questions. Almost all of the questions and comments came from the NGOs representatives present at the meeting, which led me to wonder if the industry representatives had been consulted previously, or if they simply had nothing to contribute to the discussion.

The NBEN was invited to send two delegates to this consultation. However, because other environmental groups were also invited to attend, the NBEN's delegate selection process was not used. Environmental groups were outnumbered by industry representatives (Xstrata, J. D. Irving, Irving Pulp & Paper, Frasier Papers, NB Power, Irving Oil, and more). Attendees from environmental groups were: Conservation Council of New Brunswick (David Coon and Sharon Flatt), New Brunswick Lung Association (Ken Maybee and Barb McKinnon), the Citizens Coalition for Clean Air (Gordon Dalzell), and the New Brunswick Environmental Network (Raissa Marks).

Those at the consultation session will have the opportunity to provide written comments on the proposed plan until August 1. This will be followed by a period for public comment in the Fall.