

Experts urge a second look at disintegrator

By Jen Mt. Pleasant

SIX NATIONS - A small group of concerned community members attended the Six Nations Elected Council (SNEC) last Friday afternoon to raise concerns about the Kearns disintegrator at the landfill site. With them, were two activists from off the territory who are knowledgeable about the harmful effects of waste incineration. One activist has been successful in stopping other municipalities in southern Ontario from having these machines.

Ella Haley is a Professor at Athabasca University and teaches Environmental Studies. Liz Benneian is the Manager of Partnership Programs for Oakvillegreen Conservation Association. Both ladies had recently heard about the proposed disintegrator that SNEC is planning on purchasing from John Kearns of Kearns International which is based out of Nova Scotia. Haley and Benneian had grave concerns regarding health effects on humans and environmental pollution and degradation.

Haley stated that she, along with Benneian at-

tended SNEC last Friday to try and convince them that any type of incineration is detrimental to the community and to the environment. "I told her (Elected Chief Ava Hill) that I teach about the environment and health and I just mentioned to them about the precautionary principle. If you have concerns or if the community has concerns, you err on the side of caution."

Despite increased concerns about the disintegrator from a growing number of community members, SNEC went into 'Phase Two' of the project with Kearns back in April of this year. Once the deal is finalized, SNEC will pay Kearns around 6 million dollars for the purchase of a brand new unit.

The *Two Row Times* spoke with a respected community member who lives near the landfill site on Fourth Line who wished to remain anonymous. When asked if he noticed any smell coming from the unit, he stated, "There is definitely a toxic smell coming from that machine. It smells like tar and it is definitely a new smell. I know exactly when that machine is running back there because of the smell. It's

running right now actually because I can smell it.

"I know for sure this machine wouldn't be allowed in the cities so why would we have something like this here. And it's not like I can just move away from this thing. I'm pretty much stuck here. One of my sons lived with me but since the disintegrator was built back there, he got worried about the chemicals in the air and so he packed up and moved to the city."

The biggest concern at last week's community meeting was the lack of knowledge about waste incineration at the community level. Even SNEC seem to be oblivious to the various research studies conducted in the past few decades on the hazards of waste incineration. Many countries around the world have banned waste incineration.

What newer studies are now finding is that these machines produce what is known as nano-particles. According to Benneian, "No matter how advanced people claim disintegrator technology is, smaller toxic particles will be released into the air. These are known as nano-particles.

There is no such thing as zero emissions," stated Benneian.

"I always tell people, the first law of physics is that nothing is created nor destroyed. For someone to say he is able to burn any type of garbage without any sort of emissions is a lie. When burned, garbage either turns into ash or smoke. The toxins from the burned garbage don't just disappear, it goes into the ashes and into smoke and eventually it goes into the air that we breathe," stated Benneian.

In one study done on the effects of nanoparticles caused by waste incinerators, "To increase the efficiency of an incinerator, often the combustion temperatures are increased and this leads to the generation of finer particles. The higher the combustion temperatures the finer the particles that will be generated. A finer particle will travel further and quicker into the human organism, reaching the blood and therefore the vital organs in a matter of minutes.

"Once particles of heavy metals enter the organism and, in the case of nano-particles, the

cells' cores, they can't be eliminated. Waste incineration produces, amongst many other pollutants, ultrafine particles - such as heavy metals - and the demonstrated link between the exposure to these particles and the occurrence of a wide range of serious diseases - such as cancer, sarcomas, neurological diseases, fetal malformations and many others."

What is even more worrisome, according to Benneian, is that there is currently no air quality test that can detect the deadly nano-particles.

Elected Chief Ava Hill told the *Two Row Times* in an email, "The Elected

Council has not made the final decision to purchase the Kearns machine. We are not pushing this through and we have not signed any deals. We are in negotiations.

"We also made a commitment to have the air tested and staff are looking into who can do that testing. The Committee is meeting on Friday and will make a recommendation to Council. As to whether Council wants to listen to various experts about what they believe the hazards of this unit to be, that will be a decision that Council will make based on a recommendation from the Committee."