

GOVERNMENT: Seeking \$600,000 in lost wages due to illness

Ex-hydro worker feels vindicated by Agent Orange report



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Keith Rankin had signs made for his car during the 2011 provincial election to tell residents about his struggles related to chemicals he was exposed to while working for Ontario Hydro.

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Vindication.

"I knew it all along," was Keith Rankin's reaction to a provincial independent fact-finding panel's results of Agent Orange.

"Based on some of the exposure assessment scenarios, exposure substantially exceeded safe thresholds in some subgroups of the Ontario population," stated the report released Thursday.

In some cases, exposure levels were 700 times more than what was considered safe.

People exposed to the chemical worked for Ontario Hydro, Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Transportation.

Mr. Rankin, a Whitchurch-Stouffville resident and former Ontario Hydro employee, was not exposed to Agent Orange, but Garlon.

But he feels similarly affected.

Agent Orange was used by the United States' military to clear jungles and expose enemy territory during the Vietnam War.

"I'd like to see criminal charges brought because they've known this for years," Mr. Rankin said.

Mr. Rankin was first exposed to Garlon in 1998 as an Ontario Hydro employee. He was only cautioned to not spray it around water because it killed fish. Protective clothing was provided.

At the time, Mr. Rankin said he only suffered from some nausea.

However, one day when a fellow co-worker was goofing around at the end of a shift, he sprayed Garlon directly into Mr. Rankin's eyes.

Four months later, he was wearing glasses for the first time, with the prescription changing rapidly.

Since then, Mr. Rankin has suffered from a myriad of health issues that include carpal tunnel syndrome, TIA strokes, cataracts and reflex sympathetic dystrophy. His skin recently broke out in an unexplained rash.

"Some people will react and some won't," said Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk, a Canadian scientist who spent more than 10 years researching Agent Orange's impact in Vietnam.

The list of diseases associated with expo-

sure to Agent Orange include cancer, skin disorders, diabetes and conditions of the nervous system.

For some people, it will take 20 or 30 years to develop cancer. It all depends on the person's immune system and amount of exposure, according to Dr. Dwernychuk.

The panel's findings were not surprising and "they are what they are," Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, told The Sun-Tribune Friday morning.

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"(There's) anxiety for those who were exposed," she added.

Mr. Rankin said he spent four years prior to the 2011 provincial election, trying to gain the assistance of Ms Jaczek for his claims against Hydro One and the Workers Safety and Insurance Board. He said she never responded.

"I know my staff would have tried to assist him with the issue he had," she told The Sun-Tribune yesterday.

Ms Jaczek also said the only contact she had with Mr. Rankin was in regards to a CPP problem a few years ago. Her staff directed him to MP Paul Calandra's office, whose staff resolved the situation.

In 2010, Mr. Rankin received some compensation from the WSIB. Now, he wants more, about \$600,000, which is what he would have earned if he worked until 2010.

"If he wishes to pursue a claim, we will connect him with the right people. That is what we do," Ms Jaczek said.

With files from Torstar News Service

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CORRECTION NOTICE

In the June 13th ad for the Village Grocer, items in the "What's Baking for Father's Day" section were incorrectly marked at 25% off. Please note: the prices are **as listed**, the 25% discount **does not** apply this week. The Markham Economist & Sun and the Stouffville Sun Tribune sincerely regret the error and apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.