

Under a Cloud: Ontario Smog Deathrate Spirals

Written by

Tuesday, 14 June 2005 10:18 - Last Updated Tuesday, 14 June 2005 10:18

Under a Cloud: Ontario Smog Deathrate Spirals

C. L. Cook -PEJ News - The Ontario Medical Association released its estimates of 5,800 Ontarians dying a premature death due to air pollution today. Like the equinox, OMA's annual report has become a mark of departure for the turning seasons. **-{lex}**

Under a Cloud

C. L. Cook

June 14, 2005

It's officially summer in Toronto, and that means the old and the young, and those suffering asthma, or taking certain pharmaceuticals are forewarned to venture only into the outside world at their peril. The CBC is reporting today, Toronto is suffering its 21st "smog day" of 2005. It's a milestone not usually attained until the dog days, but that was the past. The never-ending multiplication of the automobiles, Ontario's famous "business first" attitude toward air pollution legislation and enforcement, and markedly warmer weather now promise every day could be Smog Day.

If you take a drive some Friday afternoon out to the 400, the highway heading north to Muskoka and cottage country, you'll get a good idea of why Toronto, and now the distant lakeside refuge sought by its denizens, is in trouble. There are thousands of cars, crawling through the heat to reach relief at the cottage. Many of those thousands being SUV's, minivans, and monster trucks; many will be towing and stowing Seadoo's, powerboats, and the plethora of gas-powered landscaping machines deemed necessary to manicure the wilds around the summer place. It's no wonder smog has travelled further and sooner in the season than previously seen. And summer is just getting started in Ontario Airy O.

The O.M.A. estimates 17,000 hospital admissions province-wide annually due to particulates, dust, smoke, and ground-level ozone. The association's president, Dr. Greg Flynn suggests, "I expect to see people come through my autopsy department who have died as a result of local environmental conditions."

Though certainly a "local condition," not all of the blame can be lain at the feet of car mad Canadians. There are approximately 200 coal-fired power plants just south of the border, and millions of cars and other factories contributing to the murk pushed across the landscape by the hot air currents that begin their life in the sultry oil Gulf of Mexico. But, if many can claim a part in the pollution, few are willing to make efforts to stop it.

The Sierra Club of Canada's John Bennett sums it up. "We have a problem of industry not

