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Yellowknife

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Cut air pollution, study says

by Alex Taylor
Northern News Services

Royal Oak would have to decrease the amount of sulphur dioxide pouring out of its roaster stack by up to 95 per cent to meet NWT air quality recommendations, a Renewable Resources study says.

But high costs make it unlikely the company will retool to cut back on emissions of the gas, which has been linked to acid rain in wetter parts of Canada.

"The technology to retrofit or installing new technology is very expensive," said Emery Paquin, the director of the environmental protection division of Renewable Resources.

Instead, the company is discussing the possibility of diluting the impact of the estimated 50-65 tonnes of sulphur dioxide released daily by spreading it over a larger area, Paquin said.

Renewable Resources and Royal Oak are looking at different ways of achieving this goal, including:

- increasing the height of the roaster stack,
- raising the temperature of the gas so it goes higher in the atmosphere,
- increasing exit velocity of gases coming through the stack.

"Sulphur dioxide can be a health problem," Paquin said, noting it can be hard on peo-

ple with sensitive skin or asthma.

The biggest threat, however, is to the environment. Sulphur dioxide can combine with water in the atmosphere to form an acid that corrodes plant cells when they absorb the water.

Acid rain is not considered a big problem here, given the arid climate. But sulphur damage in trees around Yellowknife can be seen up to five kilometres north of the city on Vee Lake Road.

The investigation into Giant emissions was first requested under the NWT Environmental Rights Act by Chris O'Brien and Kevin O'Reilly, two Yellowknifers who are active in local and global environmental organizations.

The act gives the public a vehicle to make direct requests to the government for information and action on environmental issues.

The latest Renewable Resources study into Giant emissions employed computers to create a model used to study how the gas moves and acts when it leaves the stack.

The technology was originally developed in the United States by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The NWT's air quality guidelines are basic recommendations. There are no penalties that force compliance.



JUST LOVE THE HAT! Mr.

Mackenzie Brown dressed up to celebrate Canada Day. You nev girl needs a little protection from the sun.

Teen's body found in bush

