

Expert Panel Convenes to Review Ecological Risk Assessment:

SOILS STUDY RECEIVES INDEPENDENT PEER REVIEW

SUDBURY, ON – The Sudbury Soils Study was the focus this week for six highly respected North American environmental health scientists who convened as an Independent Expert Review Panel (IERP) to assess the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA), which is part of a comprehensive environmental study underway in the region.

Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment (*TERA*) of Cincinnati, Ohio, hosted a Public Briefing on Monday evening at Collège Boréal, attracting more than 50 community members. Environmental scientist Jacqueline Patterson, who coordinated the IERP, outlined the peer-review process and introduced the panel members in attendance.

“We know the results of this ecological study are very important to this community, where mining has been a major economic and social influence for over a century,” said Patterson. “We are very honoured to be here this week to review the scientific approaches that were used by the authors in this report.

“The role of the expert panel is to conduct an in-depth evaluation and interpretation of the science, to ensure that the study follows acceptable principles and is scientifically defensible.”

Following the briefing, the expert panel met for two days of technical review meetings with the Sudbury Area Risk Assessment (SARA) Group, the consultants who conducted the study and prepared the draft ERA report. Based on the findings of the peer-review, *TERA* will submit a consolidated report with recommendations to the Technical Committee, the multi-stakeholder group directing the Sudbury Soils Study.

While the detailed IERP Report is expected to take several months to complete, the panel members agreed on the following general findings in their review:

- **The panel concluded that the ERA represents the current state of the science in ecological risk assessment and it has achieved its two major goals: to characterize the current and future risks of metals to terrestrial ecosystem components; and to provide information to support activities related to the recovery of regionally representative, self-sustaining ecosystems in areas affected by the metals.**
- **The ecological risk assessment approaches were consistent with commonly accepted methods and sound scientific procedures.**
- **The assumptions, methods, results, and conclusions described in the assessment are generally clear and transparent. The scientific uncertainties associated with the assessment and underlying soil studies were appropriately identified and considered.**
- **The panel recognized that the non-metal stressors to the plant and wildlife communities are important considerations to accurately characterize risks that are indistinguishable from the direct risks of the metals.**
- **The panel compliments the SARA Group for preparing a comprehensive terrestrial risk assessment.**

- **The panel recognized that a landscape ecological assessment would be incomplete without consideration of risks to aquatic and wetland communities.**
- **The panel recognized that the data from this terrestrial risk assessment will provide a valuable baseline from which to evaluate the effectiveness of risk management as it proceeds in the future.**

When results of the ERA are released later this year, a consolidated summary of the panel's comments and recommendations will be published with the report and posted online at www.tera.org.

TERA is a non-profit corporation dedicated to helping environmental, industry, and government groups find common ground through the application of good science to risk assessment.

The Sudbury Soils Study is one of the most comprehensive studies of its kind ever conducted in Canada. Thousands of soil, air, water, vegetable, livestock and fish samples were analyzed for the presence of certain metals that are associated with historic mining activities.

Technical Committee members include representation from CVRD-Inco, Xstrata Nickel (formerly Falconbridge), the City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario Ministry of Environment (MOE), Sudbury & District Health Unit (SDHU), and Health Canada First Nations & Inuit Health Branch.

For more information on the Sudbury Soils Study, visit the website at www.sudburysoilsstudy.com or contact the following:

Sudbury Soils Study (SARA) <i>General Information</i>	TERA (Cincinnati, OH) <i>IERP process and meetings</i>	Sudbury PAC <i>Public consultation</i>
Dr. Christopher Wren 1-866-315-0228 questions@sudburysoilsstudy.com	Jacqueline Patterson 1-513-521-7426 patterson@tera.org	John Hogenbirk 675-1151, ext. 3435 jhogenbirk@laurentian.ca