

February 23, 2009

Governor David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Pollution in the Tonawanda/Grand Island Bridge neighborhoods

Dear Governor Paterson:

I am writing to support the request of the Clean Air Coalition and Erie County Legislator Michele Iannello for action to reduce the release of toxic chemicals near residential neighborhoods surrounding the Grand Island Bridge as it crosses the Niagara River from the Town of Tonawanda to Grand Island.

The joint EPA/DEC Tonawanda Community Air Study was an important step forward in characterizing the levels of formaldehyde, benzene, acrolein, carbon tetrachloride, and acetaldehyde in this neighborhood. The results of the study clearly indicate the need for concern, if not alarm. We have now documented that both known and probable carcinogens are being released into residential neighborhoods at what appear to be very high levels.

As a DEC press release on the study noted, "Industrial facilities located in the study area include gasoline distribution terminals, coke ovens, tire manufacturing, sponge manufacturing, and a coal-fired power plant. The area also contains significant truck and automobile traffic, which are also contributing factors that need to be evaluated when assessing air quality."

The trip over Grand Island Bridge is well known locally for its pronounced odors and Western New Yorkers have long speculated on the possible health impacts of the chemical stew in the air here.

Now that the results are in, it is time for a plan of action. Even if it is found that all the industries are operating within their permitted limits, we are dealing with a clear instance of cumulative impacts combining to yield an unacceptable result.

I request that you join me for a tour of this area along with the Commissioners of Health and Environmental Conservation, to be followed by an open session with residents and representatives of the industries in question, where solutions can be offered and explored.

There is an important role for NY State to play in bringing all parties to the table, and I appeal to you as the leader of our great state to help make it happen. As we move aggressively into the era

of the green economy, I for one will not stand by while any part of the 60th Senate District continues to be ravaged by pollution of the air, land or water.

I believe that, with enough resolve, we can create a win-win situation here. In fact this issue may be coming to a head at just the right time. Can there be a more fitting use of stimulus money than to help local industries in this area to clean up their releases and thereby insure the viability of the jobs at these plants for years into the future? Greening New York will be far less meaningful if we can't solve the problems of our most polluted neighborhoods in the process. In this crisis lies a profound opportunity and I pledge to work constructively with you in grasping it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Antoine M. Thompson
New York State Senate, 60th District

Cc: Ms. Jackie James-Creedan, Executive Director, Clean Air Coalition
Mr. J.D. Crane, Owner&CEO, Tonawanda Coke
Mr. Pete Grannis, Commissioner , NYSDEC
Dr. Richard F. Daines, Commissioner, NYSDOH
Ms. Michele M. Iannello, Erie County Legislator
Mr. Anthony Caruana, Supervisor, Town of Tonawanda
Mr. Ronald J. Pilozzi, Mayor, City of Tonawanda

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