

Cleaning up our Act

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The Clean Air Act for New Brunswick came into force on December 15, 1997. This Act was demanded by the people of New Brunswick, who petitioned and got 16,000 signatures supporting this bill. This Act is unique in Canada. It contains a section to protect human health, which is a breakthrough in Clean Air Acts across the country. Before the Environment Minister can set new objectives for companies, he must consult with the ministry of health. Also in the Act is a clause that makes the polluter pay for the damage he causes to the air and atmosphere. The system is one which makes a company pay a fine if it has not followed regulations. If a company gets fined three times, that's three strikes, and the fourth time is not only a fine, but a criminal charge. Hopefully, this will make companies clean up their act!

The Clean Air Act stresses public participation and notification on issues concerning air pollution. Since the Act came out, a website has been established to inform the public of goings-on. "Clean Air groups would like to see meaningful public consultation on air issues, and the government must give the public the means to do this effectively," says Gordon Dalzell, of the Citizens Coalition for Clean Air. Dalzell would also like to see new regulations which allot funding to clean air groups to be able to hire clean air consultants or lawyers. There are currently no regulations in place concerning this.