

# Clean Air Act Update

by Matthew Jonah

The Clean Air Act was officially passed in the legislature this December. Currently, the provincial Department of the Environment is looking for feedback on the Act's draft regulations for administrative penalties. Those concerned with provincial clean air legislation should obtain a copy of the draft, as the proposed changes will affect the enforcement of the new Act. Some of the proposed changes will lower fines for polluters. Currently, the maximum fine under the administrative penalty is \$5,000. The Department is hoping to have these fines as low as \$200. Environmentalists are concerned that this rate is just too low.

The Department has also announced a cost-recovery initiative to support the administration of the Clean Air Act. Owners and operators of air emission sources must supply the money to staff and administer the Clean Air Act each year. Certain annual licenses, for pulp and paper mills, power generating stations and other emission sources, will generate from \$3,000 to \$42,000 annually. Other fees will increase from \$3,000 to \$15,000.

Most observers feel that the Act is a good one, but its' enforcement will decide its effectiveness. Some environmentalists are very concerned with the Act because emission standards have been replaced by guidelines which will not have the same force in law. Soon, the draft public consultation documents will be released and the department will be looking for feedback on these documents also.