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Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, Medical Officer of Health
Sudbury and District Health Unit
1300 Paris St.
Sudbury ON P3E 3A3

November 29, 2011

Dear Dr. Sutcliffe:

I am writing to you regarding concerns over the handling of the Cyanobacteria (Blue-Green Algae) out break on the lower Vermillion River in early October of 2011. A neighbour and I both contacted a health inspector with the Sudbury and District Health Unit to report suspicious looking algae in the river. An inspector came that day and sampled the water at the neighbour's dock. We were pleased with this prompt response. Unfortunately there are a number of areas that need remediation.

First, as you know the sample is then given to the Ministry of the Environment for testing which takes 7 days to report results. During that time except for a few people who we personally knew and warned, most people using the river would have continued using it normally for drinking water, use in saunas, fishing, watering of livestock and gardening. **The waiting time for test results is unacceptable. Surely there are alternatives to this process and facilities closer to Sudbury.**

Once the results were available, the neighbour and I, and a few houses along River Road were informed in person with hand delivered notices of the hazards of Cyanobacteria. To my knowledge we were the only members of the public living upstream and downstream of the test area to be notified personally. Others on the river were left to find out via media and word of mouth. **Since the outbreak was in the current of the river rather than shallow areas and bays, this too is unacceptable given the potential for serious health consequences.**

Fortunately, leadership on the part of The Vermillion River Stewards resulted in a public information session on October 11, 2011 in which Dr. Charles Ramcharan gave us pertinent information, an interpretation of test results and a protocol to follow while the outbreak continued to run its course.

Now, as common sense might dictate we think that the Cyanobacteria is dead and no longer a risk to health because the water is now cold and there has been a large influx of new water from heavy rainfall into the system. So do we draw drinking water from the river again? Do we eat the fish? Do we use our saunas again? Should the water have been tested again in several areas? Should testing occur in the spring and summer regardless of sightings of algae? Does the Sudbury and District Health unit investigate the likely causes so that preventative measures can be taken? **The lack of follow up and communication on the part of the Health Unit is also unacceptable.**

In summary, the Sudbury and District Health Unit needs to revisit and rework the protocol for Cyanobacteria outbreaks and increase its diligence and support for those affected so that health can be protected.

Sincerely,

Lesley Flowers

Cc France Gelinis MPP

Mayor Matichuck, Mayor City of Greater Sudbury

Sudbury Star

Northern Life

Jacques Barbeau, Councillor Ward 2

Linda Heron, Vermillion River Stewardship