

# **EnCana to heighten B.C. smokestack over odour complaints**

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One of B.C.'s biggest natural gas plants is fouling the air because its smokestack is too short, CBC News has learned.

EnCana opened its multi-million-dollar Steeprock gas plant south of Dawson Creek in 2006, with B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell on hand for the ceremonial ribbon cutting.

But frequent and long-standing complaints from area residents about foul odours coming from the plant have led to the determination that the plant's smokestack is about half the height it should be. "What we're looking at doing is heightening the incinerator stack to 225 feet [70 metres]," said EnCana spokeswoman Carol Howes.

B.C. Energy Minister Blair Lekstrom said the government is aware of the smokestack issue and believes the project should be completed as quickly as possible.

"As quickly as it can be done, it should be done," said Lekstrom.

The smoke presents a lifestyle problem, not a health risk, for residents, said the minister.

'How do we know we're not getting cancer from it?' —Mary Fossum, Tomslake resident  
"The issue is odour," Lekstrom told CBC News. "This is a quality-of-life issue."

A spokesman for the energy minister said the emissions were mostly byproducts of natural gas combustion and included water and carbon dioxide.

But EnCana had different information, saying the emissions from the incinerator contain sulfur dioxide but at "very, very" low levels that are well within occupational hazard limits.

"They're a nuisance level," said Howes.

## **Health effects a concern**

Some people living downwind from the plant aren't so sure.

"How do we know we're not getting cancer from it and we're going to live 15 years less," said Mary Fossum, who has lived for decades in Tomslake, about 10 kilometres from the Steeprock plant.

She and her neighbours have been subject to a sulphurous odour for at least the last 18 months and are often forced indoors by the smell, Fossum said.

"We had a daughter graduate and we had a yard party. I was so worried that smell would blow into my yard. We can't even have company here."

EnCana has committed to extending the smokestack, but the project is currently out for tender and it will take several months to complete.

The delay worried Fossum even more.

“I just find it really sad, the length of time it takes. Lots of people have been sick,” she said.

## **EnCana targeted**

A series of six bombings targeting EnCana gas lines have occurred since October 2008.

A letter sent to local news media believed to be from the bomber accused the company of endangering the health of people living near its gas wells.

Police questioned Alberta resident Wiebo Ludwig and searched his home in January but no charges have been laid. Ludwig spent two years in prison in the 1990s after he was convicted of bombing oil and gas wells.