

M

High illness rate near oilsands worrisome, says Alberta health official

Last Updated: Friday, March 10, 2006 | 1:00 PM ET

CBC News

A medical examiner in Alberta wants to know why there are reports of serious illnesses, including a rare cancer, in a small First Nations community near the province's oilsands.

This is Exhibit M referred to in the affidavit of Stephen Hazell sworn before me, this 4th day of January 2008
[Signature]
A COMMISSIONER FOR TAKING AFFIDAVITS

- INDEPTH: [Alberta's oilsands](#)

A high number of illnesses, including leukemia, lymphomas, lupus, and autoimmune diseases, have been diagnosed in Fort Chipewyan, a community of about 1,200 people living 300 kilometres north of Fort McMurray.

Elders in the community say they didn't see these kinds of diseases until the oil industry started production near their homes on the southwestern tip of Lake Athabasca.

Syncrude and Suncor extract and process hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil a day in their oil sands projects near the community.

Further development is planned for the oilsands, which cover an area in northwestern Alberta that's larger than the state of Florida.

But Fort McMurray Medical Examiner Dr. John O'Connor says he'd like some answers before more developments are approved. O'Connor says he is diagnosing unusually high numbers of immune system diseases affecting the thyroid and less serious ones such as rheumatoid arthritis and skin rashes.

He has also treated five people in the community who died recently from a rare, almost always fatal cancer that should occur once in every 100,000 people.

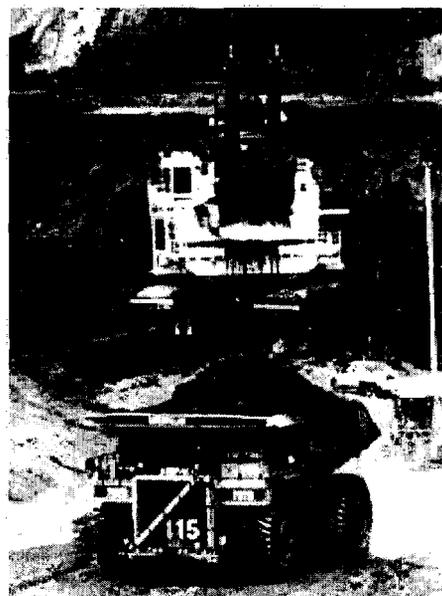
"With my increasing lack of ability to explain why I'm seeing such numbers, it worries me and it does call for a health study to be initiated as soon as possible," says O'Connor.

He is in negotiations with Health Canada to start an epidemiological investigation that would track the health of the community.

Warren Simpson, a resident of Fort Chipewyan, says he hopes it happens soon before any more members of his small community die.

"My dad, my sister, my aunt, a lot of my cousins have it, my friends' families ... a lot of them have died of cancer and some of them are dying now of cancer," he said.

Simpson successfully fought off cancer, but says he's scared it will come back.



Oilsands development approximately 75 km north of Fort McMurray. (CP file photo)

With between 1.7 trillion and 2.5 trillion barrels, the oilsands reserves are considered second only to those in Saudi Arabia.

Chevron plans huge Alberta oil project
[ONT Edition]

Toronto Star - Toronto, Ont.
Author: RUSSELL GOLD
Date: Mar 3, 2006
Start Page: F.01
Section: Business
Text Word Count: 361

Document Text

Chevron Corp. said yesterday it plans to develop a giant oil-sands project in Alberta, the latest in a string of investments that is quickly turning the region around Fort McMurray into one of the world's fastest growing oil-producing regions.

Chevron acquired leases for 72,840 hectares from the provincial government in two separate sales. The San Ramon, Calif.-based company said there could be 7.5 billion barrels of oil in tar-like deposits there.

Chevron plans to use a steam-flooding technique to get the oil to flow into wells that typically recovers between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of the oil, said James Bates, vice-president of operations for Chevron's Canada unit.

Bates said that ultimately producing 100,000 barrels a day is conceivable.

While Chevron acquired the leases for about \$70 million, developing the project, called Ells River, is the most costly part of oil-sands ventures. Bates said he expected the price to run into the "billions" and it could take a decade.

Chevron will spend the next couple of years appraising the oil potential. Oil-sands operations require extensive capital investments to upgrade the viscous oil extracted from the ground into something that can be run through refineries and turned into gasoline. Operating costs can also be quite high.

Major oil companies are clamouring to get involved in oil-sands production. While it is more costly to get crude from the oil sands than it is from an offshore platform, high global crude prices have made oil-sands development attractive. Companies are also drawn to Canada's stable political and

fiscal climate and the potential size of the resource.

"In terms of actual investments, over the next 10 years, we're looking at something on the order of \$60 billion plus," said Bill Wall, a technical specialist for the National Energy Board. This investment could be constrained by shortages of skilled labour, potential environmental regulations and falling global oil prices.

Royal Dutch Shell PLC and Western Oil Sands each have the right to acquire a 20 per cent minority interest in the project. Shell, Chevron and Western Oil Sands are partners on Muskeg River Mine, another oil-sands project, near Fort McMurray.

Credit: The Wall Street Journal

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.