

Emissions loophole must be closed

Provincial government officials need to close a loophole which has the potential to allow the petroleum industry to increase emissions of smog-causing chemicals.

An industry emissions reduction plan, which completed a second round of public consultations this month, is expected to be implemented by the end of the year.

Critics rightly point out that the draft assigns relatively small cuts to the petroleum sector as a whole and because companies can buy and sell emission reduction credits with other Ontario and U.S. companies, air pollution sector-wide could increase.

The loophole has caught the attention of the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers in Point Edward which questions a plan where you could "buy your way out of your responsibility in

your local airshed."

A coalition of health and environmental groups have written Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky rejecting the plan as flawed.

Overall, the plan is a good one. In its current form, the legislation would reduce projected nitrogen oxide emissions from oil refineries by four per cent over the next decade. But critics argue, if companies took full advantage of credit trading provisions, emissions could increase 48 per cent next year and still be 28 per cent higher by 2015.

If this province and country is to move forward in its goal to reduce pollution, we must ensure the legislation governing such policy is airtight. We would hope the province will move to close the emissions loophole before the legislation is put into effect.