

# Firm fined \$17,000 for chemical spill, delay in reporting

By LORNE SLOTNICK

A Toronto adhesives firm was fined \$17,000 yesterday for an April chemical spill that sent five people to hospital and closed three schools in the west-end Junction Triangle area.

The company pleaded guilty to two charges under the Environmental Protection Act — discharging contaminants, for which the maximum \$10,000 fine was levied, and failure to notify the provincial Environment Ministry of the spill, which drew an additional \$7,000 penalty.

Provincial Court Judge Robert Dnieper had unusually harsh words for Nacan Products Ltd., in his judgment.

"I venture to say that this mischief would have been averted had the defendant Nacan had as much control over six barrels of butyl acrylate as it has over a 10-cent item in its petty cash flow," he said after hearing that other companies in the area had done extensive checking for chemical leaks before Nacan finally owned up to the spill.

In a statement presented to the court, the Wallace Avenue

firm admitted that on April 6 it dumped about 820 gallons of vinyl acetate and butyl acrylate into the sewer system, the source of the acrid vapors that escaped into nearby streets. The chemicals — used in glue manufacturing — are toxic, flammable and highly odorous.

Many complaints of headaches, nausea, dizziness and upset stomachs followed the spill. Residents in the area have complained for years about pollution from Nacan and other factories.

After the chemicals were dumped, Judge Dnieper said, the fumes were in a potentially explosive concentration in the sewers. He said the fact that the spill was not intentional was no excuse. "The offence was the spill, but the guilt was in not ensuring it couldn't happen. . . . The plant was not engineered so as to prevent this possibility."

When Nacan did admit responsibility for the spill a week after it happened, the company blamed one of its workers for the incident.