

# SNIFFING OUT ISSUES

## Politicians smell votes in raising stink over pollution

By LORNE SLOTNICK

The hot, humid nights of summer have always been the worst in Toronto's Junction Triangle area, when the acrid fumes from factories seem to hang in the air indefinitely.

But this summer there is a new smell in the west-end neighborhood; it's the smell of votes, as politicians look for lively local issues in an otherwise sleepy municipal election year.

After years of agitating against air and noise pollution from more than 20 industries, the 5,500 residents of the Junction Triangle now find politicians — many of whom dismissed their complaints in the past — falling over themselves to support the fight to clean up the area.

"All of a sudden, every politician in the city has become involved," said 33-year-old Virginia Jendruszka, who has lived in the area all her life. "People have squawked about this before and nobody's done anything."

"You have to wonder what the motive is behind it — but it is an election year," said the Symington Avenue resident, who is secretary of the recently formed Citizens Watchdog Committee.

The triangle, a one-quarter square mile area northeast of Bloor and Dundas streets, is a pleasant working-class neighborhood — except that many of the residents live within feet of chemical plants, rubber factories, foundries and other heavy industries that dot the area.

Stinging eyes, breathing problems, sore throats, dizzy spells, rashes, cramps and headaches have long been on the residents' list of gripes. Some complain they face a choice between smelling the fumes and leaving their windows closed on hot nights. Others worry more about the long-term health effects of living next to factories that use toxic substances.

Douglas Saunders, a researcher with the Toronto health department, said the city has no list of the chemicals being used in the factories, nor does anybody know the effects of living in an area like the Junction Triangle.

The health department is drawing up a proposal for a health survey of the area. Mr. Saunders said he suspects there are some effects, particularly for people who are already susceptible to allergies or respiratory problems.

While area residents may be suspicious about the politicians' motives in discovering the Junction Triangle, they aren't complaining about their neighborhood's new-found status as a sexy municipal issue. "Maybe at last something will get done," Miss Jendruszka said.

The problem now is that many residents will not be satisfied with a campaign to clean up the factories, like the one now being spearheaded by Toronto Mayor Arthur Eggleton. After years of hearing promises of a cleanup, they want the worst offenders kicked out of their area.

"The people here have been monitored, watchdogged and poked and prodded enough; they've been dragged to too many meetings," school trustee Douglas Little told a meeting of the mayor's task force on the Junction Triangle last week. "Industry has squandered the good will of the residents."

He argued, to loud applause from the more than 100 residents at the meeting, that the city has to consider expropriating the factories and replacing them with light industry or housing.

Mr. Eggleton's task force, composed of local aldermen and officials from the city, Metro and the Ontario Government, was put together this summer after a series of chemical spills over a three-month period that closed schools and sent several people to hospital.

Four charges under the Environmental Protection Act have been laid against Nacan Products Ltd., an adhesives manufacturer, over the biggest spill on April 5. The company has admitted dumping up to 4,000 litres (900 gallons) of toxic chemicals into the sewers that day, but blamed one of its workers for the problem.

Barney Singh, an official with the

### CIVIC ISSUES



Voters this fall will be choosing people to represent them for the next three years on municipal councils and boards of education across Ontario. In this series, The Globe and Mail looks at some of the issues that successful candidates will have to deal with after ballots are counted Nov. 8.

Ontario Environment Ministry, said the ministry also plans charges against Glidden Co., a paint manufacturer, over odorous emissions into the air on June 24 and July 12.

The wave of spills and smells drove home the point that "we were dealing with something for real," said Beate Bowron, the city planner responsible

for the Junction Triangle. Planners' suggestions to restrict the industries had in the past met opposition from many politicians, but now, Miss Bowron said, "perhaps those who were more concerned about the jobs (that the factories provide) have changed their minds."

Miss Bowron agrees the residents have moved beyond a desire for a cleanup. "If you asked a lot of people right now, they'd say Glidden and Nacan should get the hell out." One man at last week's residents' meeting stood up, waved his hands, and shouted, "Canada is a beautiful country, a big country; there's lots of land. They can move."

Meanwhile, Mr. Eggleton and other recent converts to the residents' side do what they can to prod the companies into cleaning up their act. The mayor dismisses talk of expropriation, saying it's too expensive.

He says the companies should clean up or get out, but admits the city has no power other than expropriation to make them leave. "They may feel the pressure and be forced to leave," he said last week.

His task force has so far come up with an alert plan to co-ordinate responses to emergencies in the Junction Triangle.

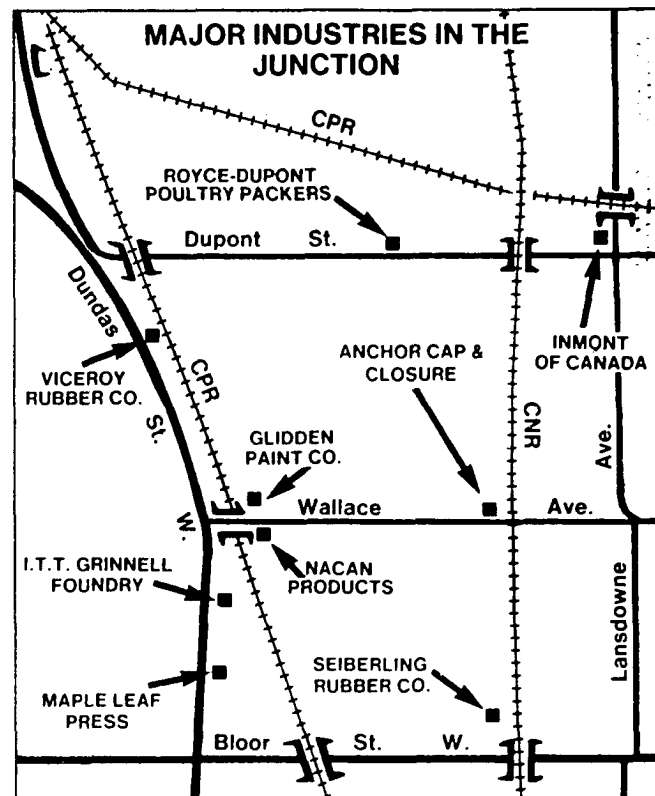
The tangle of Government agencies with various responsibilities had left residents confused and sparked many complaints.

Only a year ago, Mr. Eggleton opposed a move to designate Glidden and Nacan as non-conforming uses, which means they would need city permission to expand their operations. The move finally got through City Council this spring, but the two companies are challenging the decision before the Ontario Municipal Board.

Two years ago, both Mr. Eggleton and William Boytchuk, whose Ward 1 contains the Junction Triangle, supported a motion that would have allowed the industries to expand. Mr. Boytchuk decided to throw his support behind the residents last year.

The other alderman in Ward 1, David White, has come to the conclusion that there is not much hope that the industry can be cleaned up and that the city will have to find some way of getting rid of the factories or converting them.

Mr. White cites a 1979 letter to former mayor John Sewell from former Ontario environment minister Harry Parrott, who said the problems are inherent in the type of neighborhood the Junction Triangle is. "When houses are placed in such close proximity to manufacturing plants, a certain amount of odor will emanate into the community, regardless of the lev-



Globe and Mail, Tom Cully



William Boytchuk



David White

el of abatement activity undertaken by industry."

Mr. White has been working for four years with the Junction Triangle Anti-Pollution Group, which organized residents to support the planners' suggestions for the area.

Simone Taylor, a spokesman for the group, agrees that the best course would be for the industries to move. "I think they can be cleaned up, but there's always the danger of an explosion or a fire . . . That's why I support them eventually getting out."

In the meantime, the group wants the city to hire a consultant to recommend changes in the manufacturing processes used at the factories.

Many in the anti-pollution group were surprised when the Citizens Watchdog Committee sprung up a few weeks ago. Instigated by Parkdale MPP Tony Ruprecht, the committee is headed by Michael Homs, a former aldermanic candidate who is seen by some as a front man for Mr. Ruprecht.

"Ruprecht knows there is an existing group and I can't think of any other reason he would start one up," Mr. White said in an interview. Mr. Homs denies he is taking his cues from the Liberal MPP, but says he will definitely run in this November's election if nothing is done soon about Junction Triangle pollution.

Both groups say they want to work together, but so far co-operation has been stalled. "It's just a matter of ironing out some personality differences," Mr. White said.

The residents have directed much of their fire at the Environment Ministry, but Mr. Singh denies the ministry is dragging its feet and maintains the area can be cleaned up.

"Whether it can be cleaned up to the satisfaction of the residents is very difficult to guarantee," he said in an interview. "If there is a resident committed to removal of the industry, then the ministry and the companies may never be able to satisfy them."