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November 23, 2023

The Honourable Andrea Khanjin  
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
College Park, 5th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON, M7A 2J3  
[minister.mecp@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mecp@ontario.ca)

Greetings Minister Khanjin:

**RE: Benzene levels in Aamjiwnaang First Nation**

I am writing to request your immediate attention and action regarding critical levels of benzene pollution on the territory of Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

In May 2023, senior leadership met with high-level officials from your department, alongside Aamjiwnaang Chief and Council, where we were told by Assistant Deputy Minister Steven Carrasco that “we take the concerns seriously.”

While we would like to believe this is true, we have seen little action in the months since. The levels of benzene and other industrial pollutants in Aamjiwnaang have continued to rise and will continue to do so without your intervention. Benzene is a known carcinogen and represents a serious environmental and human health hazard, and both Aamjiwnaang First Nation members and their territory remain at risk.

This is hardly an intractable issue; data shows that the safety measures applied to Ontario petroleum refineries and chemical processing facilities are decades behind those in the United States. Solutions to ensure cleaner air are not just scientifically and commercially feasible - they are readily available.

Aamjiwnaang has recently formed a partnership table with Environment and Climate Change Canada in order to address these concerns—but in order for this partnership to be effective, the **Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) must actively participate and engage meaningfully**. There is no value to us in having your department merely play an observer role on this issue, and we request that you take swift action.

We are already working with the Government of Canada to the greatest possible extent; but the problem of industrial benzene pollution at Aamjiwnaang First Nation falls under your responsibilities as well. The health impacts on the members of Aamjiwnaang First Nation from industrial pollution is well documented. **This is not a matter that can continue to be ignored.**

We urge you to engage actively with Aamjiwnaang First Nation on a nation-to-nation basis — which includes joint decision-making with Aamjiwnaang leadership — in order to immediately address and regulate the discharge of benzene and other toxic substances that may impact their people and territory now and in the future.

We look forward to a prompt response and are counting upon your co-operation on this serious matter, and look forward to a future with cleaner air and a safer environment for all.

Sincerely,



Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare

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