

Stack-watching the air for good neighbours

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A local environmental group is inviting members of the public to join them in their **Stack Watch Marathon** to “hold polluters accountable.”

The **Good Neighbour Campaign**, a project of Environment Hamilton, is stationing volunteers at various vantage points throughout the summer where they can get a clear view of all the stacks at ArcelorMittal Dofasco. The point is to monitor and record the quality of plumes coming out of the stacks.

Katie Stiel, GNC coordinator, said Stack Watch also aims to teach citizens how to identify what might be coming out of individual stacks. Campaign volunteers hand out pamphlets that show people how to judge the opacity and odour of the fumes, and when to call the Ministry of the Environment and the company with a concern.



Stack Watch awareness campaign. Emma Ditchburn of Stack Watch stands on the corner of Burlington and Ottawa streets as part of an education and public awareness effort for the group. Cathie Coward/The Hamilton Spectator Source: The Hamilton Spectator

Lorna Moreau, a GNC volunteer who has lived near Barton and Ottawa streets for 28 years, said emissions from the stacks have been getting progressively worse since **ArcelorMittal** took over the steel-making facility.

She said the pollution makes her eyes burn, and give her a sore throat and a cough. And, she says all her outdoor furniture got damaged and she had to shut down her pool because of the large amounts of dark particulate matter getting into it.

“We’re not here to shut (the company) down. We don’t want anything other than for them to abide by the rules and be good neighbours. ‘Cause they’re not. They’re terrible,” said Moreau.

ArcelorMittal Dofasco applied for an alternative air-quality standard in 2009, and received a site-wide certificate of approval last fall. The company said it could not meet the stricter emission standard introduced by the ministry in 2005 that had a 2010 deadline.

Marie Verdun, a spokesperson for ArcelorMittal Dofasco, said that the company has its own stack identification program through the Hamilton Industrial Environmental Association. Information is available on the **HIEA’s website**, Verdun added.

“We are very happy that people are taking it upon themselves get educated and learn a little bit about the industrial landscape and be able to identify what’s here and how it works.”

GNC is aimed at reducing pollution by encouraging dialogue between industries and their neighbours — and is seeking a one-on-one meeting with ArcelorMittal Dofasco CEO Juergen Schachler, Stiel said.

“We need industry to be here. We need what they produce. So, we don’t want them to go anywhere. But on the flip side, we live here. We’re not going anywhere,” she added.

“So, if we’re both going to be here, we both need to be the best neighbours we can possibly be for each other.”

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