

ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE



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92 Franklin Street - 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

November 15, 2016

Dr. Gale Burstein, Commissioner
Erie County Department of Health
95 Franklin Street,
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dr. Burstein:

I am writing in concern to the fire that recently broke out at the former Bethlehem Steel Factory along Route 5 in Lackawanna. This fire, reported to have been caused by a light bulb setting cardboard ablaze, thankfully did not result in any direct human fatalities. However, I join many residents now in concern over how the battling of the fire may affect us long-term.

Over several days, firefighters from across the region fought the blaze. At one point before the fire was completely out, an estimated two million gallons of water had been used; a total that certainly rose before the end of the fight. The building that was on fire was known now to be a storage facility for cars and boats, and of course was the long-time home of a steel plant whose jobs carried across decades. I have concerns about the water runoff from the fire fight that I hope will be looked into.

The water must have mixed with harmful chemicals from the building before running off into Smoke Creek and Lake Erie. Lake Erie is a resource that we have the responsibility of protecting. It spawned life for generations before us and continues to be the region's source of fresh water.

I am asking the Health Department, Department of Emergency Services, and the Division of Sewerage Management to look into what chemicals could have mixed with the water used to fight the fire at the Bethlehem Steel Plant, the effects such findings could have on Lake Erie, and what actions should be taken to remediate this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick B. Burke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Legislator Patrick B. Burke

CC: Joe Fiegl, Division of Sewerage Management
Daniel Neaverth, Department of Emergency Services

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