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By NOELLE NICOLLS

Tribune Staff Reporter

nnicolls@tribunemedia.net

AN INDUSTRIAL park at the centre of health scare claims "has been cleaned up", according to Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham.

He said the companies operating at Freeport industrial park have done so for decades, and while there may have been questionable practices in the past, "it has been cleaned up".

Grace Poitier-Pinder, a resident of Pinder's Point, one of the affected communities, said the Prime Minister's views "would run some people hot".

"We live this every day, where we have the scent in our nostrils and just about every household has someone with lumps in their chest or leg, and people with cancer, as a result of sandblasting. They don't care about the Bahamian people. That is what I have to say about that, because we live it, they don't," said Mrs. Poitier-Pinder.

"They brush us off as if it is political. We are not PLP. This is a life and death matter. People are dying in this area and our government does not care. This has not just started. Under both governments we have been complaining," she said.

In the House of Assembly on Wednesday, Obie Wilchcombe, Member of Parliament for West End and Bimini, brought to the floor the concerns of residents. He called the government to seriously examine "the level to which the industrial park in Freeport is responsible for the illnesses and deaths of Bahamians".

"There was an oil spill in the summer of 2001 that blanketed the beach at Pinder's Point. For seven months from May to September some 90 persons used towels to clean up the spill," said Mr. Wilchcombe.

Mrs. Poitier-Pinder was offended by parliamentarians, who laughed at Mr. Wilchcombe when he shared information about her nephew who was born with breasts. They were surgically removed when he was 14. He is now in his

twenties.

She said it may seem like a "non issue" to parliamentarians, but they did not have to endure the plight of her nephew who was too embarrassed as a teenager to take his shirt off to the play basketball with his friends.

The matter is not something the present government has overlooked, according to Earl Deveaux, Minister of Environment.

He said the government has already made a decision to move one of the schools, Lewis Yard Primary, in the affected area, and has "teams in the field" doing assessments.

Earlier this summer, a panel of government ministers held a town meeting with residents. In attendance were Kenneth Russell, Minister of Housing, Neko Grant, Minister of Public Works and Aviation, Zhivargo Laing, Minister of State for Finance, and Mr. Deveaux. Member of Parliament for Eight Mile Rock, Vernae Grant, and Mr. Wilchcombe, were also there.

Mrs. Poitier-Pinder said the concerns of the residents in Eight Mile Rock are different than those in Pinder's Point and Lewis Yard. The latter communities have more "health" related concerns, she said.

A town meeting was conducted in Pinder's Point, however, the Minister of Environment, who was originally scheduled to attend, was unable to make it.

Earlier that day, Mrs. Poitier-Pinder said she was invited to a private meeting with a select number of community members and the Minister at the Prime Minister's Grand Bahama Office.

"What the community is asking for is first we need to be heard. We are being ignored. We are being treated as if we are playing games," she said.

The community is also asking to be relocated. The Tribune understands this will require compensation for the property owners.

"We are giving them until December before the residents go international. Enough game playing. I am mad as hell," she said.