



9 August, 2019

Dear Mayor and Councillors of MODL,

We were disappointed and disheartened to hear that the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) council voted at your meeting of July 23, 2019 to ask Premier McNeil to grant an immediate extension of the Boat Harbour Act deadline.

Your decision was made based on information presented at a closed meeting between yourselves and “industry stakeholders” - from just one industry, forestry. Apparently, you accepted the information presented by one industry without further investigation.

If this information had been presented in a public forum, and if you had heard from other stakeholders, many inaccuracies in the information on which you based your decision would certainly have been exposed. You did not take the time to meet with other stakeholders and rights holders involved in this issue, primarily Pictou Landing First Nation, but also fishermen’s organizations, before making your decision.

Your motion asks for an immediate extension to the Boat Harbour Act, without knowing whether Northern Pulp will ever be able to obtain environmental approval. You have accepted assurances that Northern Pulp is “pressing forward,” but you do not seem to be aware that Northern Pulp’s proposed new plan is almost identical to a proposal which was rejected by the federal government a number of years ago on environmental grounds.

You also do not seem to be aware that:

- Northern Pulp has had much longer than 5 years to come up with an acceptable plan. The company knew that the present system needed to be replaced when they purchased the mill in 2008. Are you aware that the 2030 lease extension end-date to which you refer was tied to an agreement to close Boat Harbour for effluent treatment by 2005 - an agreement that clearly has not been met.
- Northern Pulp’s proposal submitted in January 2019 included an on-land pipe route that the company had previously been informed by government was not acceptable.
- Although Northern Pulp claims publicly that they will have the best effluent in the world, they have not provided information on the composition of the effluent either going into the treatment system or coming out of it. They were asked by government departments to include this information before submitting their project for environmental assessment but did not do so.

- Northern Pulp plans to run its effluent pipe through the watershed of the Town of Pictou. The first the Town knew of this plan, which they oppose, was when it was made public.

Further, you do not seem to be aware that Northern Pulp's proposed plan puts the entire Nova Scotia fishing brand at risk. The [Nova Scotia Pure](#) brand promotes fish from clean, pristine waters. That is one reason why fishermen throughout Nova Scotia, PEI and New Brunswick are united in opposition to Northern Pulp's plan to pipe **60-80 million litres of treated pulp effluent every day** into the rich eco-system of the Northumberland Strait.

Do not be misled - treated effluent is not harmless. A [federal government study](#) found that effluent from 77% of Canadian pulp mills which meet regulations is harming fish or fish habitat. As Councillors, you are responsible to listen to and consider the interests of more than one sector of your community.

Last, but definitely not least, you do not seem to be aware of [the long history of broken promises to Pictou Landing First Nation](#) to close Boat Harbour for effluent treatment going back to 1991. The Boat Harbour Act was passed after a 47 million litre effluent leak in 2014. Northern Pulp was not even aware of the leak until it was spotted and reported by a neighbor walking his dog.

The mill could have been permanently closed after the leak in 2014, but Pictou Landing First Nation agreed to allow Northern Pulp five years to plan and build a new facility. That deadline was established in the Boat Harbour Act, which was passed unanimously in the Legislature. Now, six months before the deadline, Northern Pulp is so far behind schedule that they do not even have a plan that meets environmental standards. That is need-to-know background to the 31 January, 2020 deadline - there is much more.

You have asked the Premier to break that deadline and to break the agreement made with Pictou Landing First Nation in 2014 and enacted into provincial law. Did you consider your responsibilities as Nova Scotians to the First Nation community which will be directly harmed if Northern Pulp is granted an extension?

Some Councillors indicated that they felt they had no choice but to support an extension for Northern Pulp. We believe MODL council had a number of choices:

- You could have decided that the municipality would not make a decision without understanding all sides of the issue.
- You could have decided that, as a municipal government, you should not ask the province to break an agreement made in good faith with a First Nation community.
- You could have decided to let the Premier know your concerns for the forestry industry and the importance of having a plan to ease a transition in case Northern Pulp closes, without asking for an extension.
- You could have decided to do nothing.

You still have a choice. We urge you to reconsider your decision. Please, educate yourselves on the [history of broken promises to Pictou Landing First Nation](#). Educate yourselves on [the risks Northern Pulp's plan poses](#) to the Nova Scotia fishing industry, including fishers in your municipality. Begin to discuss the [different possible options for forestry](#). There is always more than one path forward.

We urge you to put aside your decision of July 23, and hear from other parties with a high stake on this issue. It is not too late to recognize that you should not have made this decision based on one-sided information. It is not too late to correct that mistake.

Friends of the Northumberland Strait is available to speak to your council, as we spoke to Cumberland Council, to provide additional information and to correct some of the misinformation you were given. We urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

Jill Graham-Scanlan
President
Friends of the Northumberland Strait

To : Mayor and Councillors
cc. Premier Stephen McNeil
Hon. Tim Houston, leader of the opposition
Hon. Gary Burrill, leader of the NDP
Chief Andrea Paul, Pictou Landing First Nation
Northumberland Fishermen's Association

