



For immediate release
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Friends of the Northumberland Strait asks province to acknowledge conflicts of interest; hand environmental assessment of Northern Pulp's proposed new facility to Feds

Pictou, Nova Scotia : Friends of the Northumberland Strait (FONS) made an unusual request to Nova Scotia Environment Minister Margaret Miller last week.

“Our organization asked the Minister of Environment to acknowledge that there are conflicts of interest which compromise the provincial government’s neutrality in conducting an environmental assessment of Northern Pulp’s new effluent treatment facility, and we asked her to hand responsibility for the environmental assessment to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency,” said Jill Graham-Scanlan, President of FONS.

FONS made the request of the Minister by letter last week. With the request, the group submitted an [eight-page document](#), detailing the reasons FONS feels the government is in a conflict position.

Among other points the group cites:

- The province has acknowledged the significant possibility that it may become the owner/operator of the new facility and has invested heavily [\$6 million] in the current design of the effluent treatment facility (ETF).
- The mill’s Indemnity Agreement, Lease Agreement and related documents impose a direct financial interest on the Province in decisions relating to the new ETF, both the cost of a new ETF and a potential claim for lost profits if the new ETF is not in operation in time to meet the deadline for closing Boat Harbour.
- The 1995 Memorandum of Understanding, to which it appears that Northern Pulp and the Province are now parties, requires the Province to, among other things, at clause 4.01.(1), “use its best efforts to assist Scott [now Northern Pulp] obtain [sic] all necessary permits, consents, and approvals to permit the construction and operation of a replacement treatment facility to replace the [Boat Harbour] Facility at the expiration of the term of the Lease.”

- In addition, the group points to the fact that Mr. Bernie Miller, former lawyer and lobbyist for Northern Pulp, now holds senior positions in the provincial government, serving both as Deputy Minister of the Office of Strategy Management, reporting directly to the Premier, and as Deputy Minister for the Department of Business.

“In his present positions, Mr. Miller is a key member of the provincial government team with a broad provincial reach,” the document notes. “It has never been clarified whether Mr. Miller is involved with any files relating to Northern Pulp’s parent company, Northern Resources Nova Scotia Corporation, its sister company Northern Timber Nova Scotia Corporation, the Westfor Management Group in which Northern Pulp is a key player, or any other related company.”

“We feel that the Nova Scotia government has a serious conflict of interest in this situation and is unable to conduct an environmental assessment of Northern Pulp’s proposed new ETF that will be, or will be seen to be, fair and unbiased,” says Graham-Scanlan.

FONS earlier submitted the document to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA), to support their request that the project be designated for a federal environmental assessment under CEAA 2012. “We feel these conflicts provide a compelling reason for CEAA to take on the environmental assessment of this project,” says Graham-Scanlan.

Over 5,000 letters from citizens have been sent to CEAA to request a federal environmental assessment of Northern Pulp’s proposed project, including a detailed submission from organizations representing over 3,000 fishermen from Nova Scotia, PEI, New Brunswick and Pictou Landing First Nation, Graham-Scanlan reports.

“We cannot allow the same bad decisions that have been made for 50 years to continue when there is so much at stake, including the livelihood of thousands of fishing families,” Graham-Scanlan says.

“We hope the Minister will do the right thing and hand over environmental assessment of the project to CEAA,” Graham-Scanlan concludes.

[FONS Letter to Minister Margaret Miller, September 27, 2018](#)

[FONS submission to CEAA, September 19, 2018](#)

[Attachments to FONS submission to CEAA](#)