



For Immediate Release

November, 19, 2019

Stakeholders call on Environment Minister to reject Northern Pulp's proposed replacement ETF

Pictou, NS: Four groups facing major risks from Northern Pulp's proposed new effluent treatment facility are calling on Environment Minister Gordon Wilson to reject the project.

"We have each reviewed Northern Pulp's focus report, and each independently come to the conclusion that the project must be rejected," say Pictou Landing First Nation, the Town of Pictou, the Fishermen's Working Group, representing 3000 fishermen from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI, and Friends of the Northumberland Strait (FONS) in a joint statement released Tuesday.

The groups say Northern Pulp's Focus Report fails to meet the terms of reference set out by Nova Scotia Environment. They also say that Northern Pulp has not provided the Minister of Environment with adequate information to determine that the project can be carried out without causing significant lasting harm to the environment and/or human health.

"Safe drinking water is a major concern for residents of the Town of Pictou," says Mayor Jim Ryan. "We raised these issues in our response to the initial Environmental Assessment document in March 2019. We corresponded with Northern Pulp to make them aware that we consider the additional risks to the Town water supply as a result of the effluent pipe crossing the Town watershed to be unacceptable. Northern Pulp's Focus Report fails to satisfactorily respond to the concerns the Town of Pictou has expressed," Mayor Ryan says. He also points to the potential for additional air pollution resulting from the burning of the sludge produced by the AST facility. "This remains an area of concern for the Town."

Jamie Simpson, lawyer for the Fishermen's Working Group says, "Northern Pulp has failed to assure us that the toxins released in the effluent will not bioaccumulate over time. Many of these contaminants accumulate in the environment, yet Northern Pulp has provided modeling of toxins for only a one month period, far too short to understand the longer-term potential impacts." The Focus Report still does not provide a full description of the effluent composition, says Simpson, and without complete information about what is in the effluent, it is not possible to conclude that harm will not be done.

Brian Hebert, lawyer for Pictou Landing First Nation, says the latest report is incomplete, the result of NPNS rushing to avoid the January 31, 2020 closure deadline under the Boat Harbour Act. “We’ve heard from our own independent consultants and scientists from five Federal government agencies and the common theme is that the work is incomplete. The Focus Report itself acknowledges that some work is still ongoing.”

Hebert says the mill owners appear to be rushing the environmental assessment work in the hope of getting environmental approval even though it may be subject to many, many conditions. “Northern Pulp has been reading between the lines of Premier MacNeil’s public comments. In July he said if the project has environmental approval, he’d have to take that into account. That’s why the Focus Report has been rushed.”

Jill Graham-Scanlan of FONS says that “There are major gaps and fundamental flaws in almost every area of the Focus Report. Modelling how the effluent will impact the environment is key. We have a critique of Stantec’s effluent and sediment modeling from Dr. Oliver Fringer of Stanford University. Dr. Fringer says the Stantec reports are ‘fundamentally unreliable’, and that contrary to Stantec’s assertions, it is likely that there will be effluent buildup within Caribou Harbour and sediment deposition near the outfall.”

Graham-Scanlan points to other issues. “There is no leak detection at all proposed for the marine pipe, and no decision has been made about what type of leak detection would be used on land. There is no marine pipe route, just a diffuser point. There is no confirmed on-land pipe route either. No construction methods have been determined for the marine pipe although the Terms of Reference require NPNS to provide this information. The focus report says only that those decisions will be left up to the contractor. There has been no examination of the risks of mercury contamination from the Canso Chemicals site adjacent to the planned construction site location for the new AST system. The list of what is wrong or missing from the Focus Report is long and concerning.”

“This proposal has high stakes for the future of our area and the province,” she adds. “We are very concerned that the government did not provide enough time for meaningful public participation to allow the best possible information to be submitted to the Minister, and we continue to be concerned about the possibility of bias given the government’s conflicting roles.”

“Northern Pulp’s Focus Report is full of mistakes about the fisheries,” says Colton Cameron, a commercial fisherman who fishes out of Caribou Harbour. “It shows no fishing for lobster within 2 km of the proposed outfall. That is completely wrong. They say rock crab are not fished below 10 metres; that is wrong. They say the effluent outfall does not fall in the marine refuge area, but simple calculations show that it does. Northern Pulp also says herring swim past the area affected by effluent to spawn - but we know the proposed outfall would discharge effluent directly into a herring spawning area.” Cameron is one of sixty-five

fishermen who submitted signed statements that they fish for lobster, crab and herring close to the diffuser, where Northern Pulp says there is no fishing.

Cameron, who has a background in structural engineering, points out the huge risks of ice damage to the marine pipe . “Northern Pulp’s ice survey results are for one year only, and they did not look at historical data. For that one year, it shows 133 measured ice scores in the Caribou Harbour area and a 7,000 square metre area of ice grounding, that would create intense cyclical stresses on an underground pipe.” Cameron says. “We knew this plan would not work. Their survey data shows that, if you interpret it correctly. And on top of that, there is no leak detection for the marine portion of the pipe.”

“Northern Pulp’s Focus Report confirms that the mill will discharge significant volumes of harmful contaminants into the environment”, says Hebert. “However, it fails to provide scientific evidence as to how the risks associated with those contaminants can be avoided if the project is approved. There is no basis on which the Minister could decide what terms and conditions to add to an environmental approval to mitigate the risks. As a result, the Minister has only two options: reject the project or order a full environmental assessment,” Hebert says.

Should the minister approve the project now Hebert notes that he would be doing so without a full environmental assessment. “That’s ridiculous given the lack of scientific rigour and the significant public concerns,” said Hebert.

“Northern Pulp has not provided the Minister of Environment with adequate information to determine that the project can be carried out without causing significant lasting harm to the environment and/or human health,” concludes Simpson. “This is the standard in the Environment Act that has to be met. The information provided by NPNS, incomplete as it is, raises concern for significant and unacceptable adverse impact risks for the Northumberland Strait marine ecosystem, local communities, and the fishing industry sector. The conclusion presented in the Focus Report that there will be no significant lasting harm to anything is not credible or supported by science.”

The Minister of Environment has until December 17 to make his decision.

November 19, 2019: Joint statement from Town of Pictou, Pictou Landing First Nation, Fishermen’s Working Group, representing the Nova Scotia Gulf Fleet Planning Board, PEI Fishermen’s Association and the Maritime Fishermen’s Union, and Friends of the Northumberland Strait (FONS)

“In April, 2019, Nova Scotia Environment required Northern Pulp to submit a Focus Report containing essential information that was missing from the Environmental Assessment documents submitted by NPNS in January 2019. Each of our groups has independently

reviewed Northern Pulp's Focus Report. We are each making the same recommendation to the Minister, based, in whole or in part, on the following points;

1. Northern Pulp has not satisfactorily answered the Terms of Reference set by Nova Scotia Environment.
2. Northern Pulp's Focus report is still missing critical information in many areas. The Focus Report contains factual errors on important issues, risks have been ignored or minimized, critical decisions are left to a later date, and scientific studies on key issues have still not been completed.
3. Northern Pulp's conclusion that there will be no significant lasting harm to the environment or human health is not credible or supported by science.
4. Northern Pulp has not provided the Minister of Environment with adequate information to determine that the project can be carried out without causing significant lasting harm to the environment and/or human health. Submissions to the Minister from our groups and other members of the public contain credible, science-based evidence that Northern Pulp's proposed project is likely to cause adverse effects or significant environmental effects which are not acceptable.

For these reasons and others, we are asking the Minister of Environment to reject Northern Pulp's proposal.”

Find links to complete group submissions, expert opinions, and science-based public responses at <https://www.friendsofthenorthumberlandstrait.ca/focus-report-responses>