

July 18, 2007

Conservation Council of New Brunswick - Sierra Legal Media Release

Feds Could Face Legal Challenge Over Irving Oil Refinery

Press release

Fredericton, NB – Environmental groups announced today that the federal government could face a legal challenge over a proposal by Irving Oil to build a massive oil refinery in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Sierra Legal filed a formal submission with the federal government on behalf of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) calling on the federal and provincial governments to work together to convene a Joint Review Panel to assess the impacts of the proposed new oil refinery. This would allow meaningful public participation and ensure effective coordination of the environmental assessment process.

“A Joint Review Panel would ensure that the public is able to participate in hearings and fully engage in the environmental assessment process,” said David Coon, Policy Director at CCNB. “If New Brunswick does not agree to establish a joint review panel, the federal government must initiate a Federal Review Panel so that full public hearings are guaranteed.”

The federal government proposes to leave the assessment of the environmental impacts of the refinery to the province, which has been a vigorous proponent of the project. The federal government wants to restrict the breadth of its own environmental assessment to nothing beyond the impacts of the project's wharf—ignoring obvious transboundary air pollution and global warming impacts of the refinery itself.

The groups' submission argues that in order to ensure meaningful assessment and pollution prevention under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the federal government must study and minimize the harmful environmental impacts of the refinery itself, not just minor effects of the refinery's wharf. CCNB is concerned about the impacts the refinery could have on air quality, public health, greenhouse gas emissions, and on federally protected endangered species such as the Right Whale and Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic Salmon.

“Given that this refinery will immediately join the ranks of the largest sources of greenhouse gas polluters in the country, the federal government has a legal obligation to examine the full environmental impacts of the project,” said Sierra Legal lawyer Justin Duncan. “If the government fails to act, there could be legal consequences.” For further information please contact:

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