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Final EIA guidelines for 2nd Irving refinery released

Assessing the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating pungent odours and calculating the effects on public health are among the guidelines for a provincial environmental impact assessment for Irving Oil's proposed refinery in Saint John.

"These guidelines are strict and thorough," New Brunswick's Environment Minister Roland Hache said Tuesday. "They clearly outline the requirements of the study and identify issues that must be considered in the assessment of this project."

The government released final guidelines that are to be used by Irving as a framework for conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed project — something required under the province's Clean Environment Act.

Irving's proposed refinery would be capable of processing up to 300,000 barrels per day of crude oil, making it the second refinery in the southern New Brunswick port city.

Draft guidelines for the provincial EIA were released to the public on April 5, and people were invited to submit feedback to the department before May 5.

According to the guidelines, Irving must assess environmental effects, including air quality, sound quality, odour and climate, from the construction, operation and maintenance of the refinery.

The company must provide details on how emissions will be controlled at each emission source and briefly discuss why the proposed technology was selected over other potential methods of control.

Irving must provide estimates of greenhouse gases caused by the project and details on how to reduce them.

Ways to minimize the strong odours caused by the projects must also be provided by the company, according to the guidelines.

Irving will also have to conduct a human health and ecological risk assessment, to consider the potential short-term and long-term health risks of "adverse environmental effects" from the project.

These include:

* Identifying risks of fires, explosions, spills and vehicle accidents.
* Assessing the risk to the local communities and Saint John if there's an accident or emergency during the shipping and handling of petroleum products.
* List accidents that have a "reasonable probability of occurring" during the operation of the project.

Irving must also assess the project's effects on wetlands, fish habitat and migratory birds.