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Conservation Council of New Brunswick

Environment Minister John Baird Exempts Colossal Refinery Development From EIA

Following close on the heels of Environment Minister John Baird's decision to exempt industry from hard caps on greenhouse gas emissions, the Minister has exempted the first Canadian oil refinery to be built since global warming became a concern, from assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Irving Oil plans to build a colossal $7 billion dollar, 300,000 barrel/day refinery adjacent to its existing refinery in Saint John. Irving's existing refinery is the largest in Canada and therefore among the to 25 greenhouse gas emitters in the country at 3.3 million tonnes of CO2 per year. The gasoline is to be marketed in the northeastern United States. Six out of 10 cars on the road in |Boston are already fueled by gasoline refined in Saint John, New Brunswick.

"We are appalled that |Mr. Baird does not plan to have |Environment Canada assess the impacts of the new |Irving refinery's emissions on global warming and smog," said David Coon, Policy Director of the Conservation Council of |New Brunswick. "Clearly, the carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides will cross provincial and international boundaries, one of the triggers for a federal environmental assessment," said Coon. "Clearly, the federal government has legal obligations for the impacts of increased greenhouse gas emissions on global warming."

"We raised these issues with Minister Baird in a letter three months ago and haven't had the courtesy of a reply," said Coon. "Yet the Minister found time in his busy schedule to fly to Saint John for a private meeting with |the Irvings to discuss the refinery project," he said.

Speaking on CBC's April 27th edition of The Current, Environment Minister John Baird said the Irvings new refinery " will provide great economic benefits for the province, a lot of jobs, a lot of hope, a lot of opportunity will be created with that. If we didn't have an intensity-based system (for regulating greenhouse gas emissions) that wouldn't be able to go ahead".

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency announced today that the proposed scope of the environmental assessment would be restricted to the potential impacts of the construction of a pier and breakwater to load gasoline and petroleum coke onto ships for export and the unloading of crude oil from supertankers. The public has until June 30th to comment on the proposed scope of the federal environmental assessment.

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