

Nuxalk House of Smayusta



WITHDRAWING FROM NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD REVIEW

Press Release April 5, 2012

Nuxalk Nation Withdraws From Enbridge Gateway Pipeline Review; Accuses Federal Government of Predetermining Project Approval

Nuxalk Nation cites the federal government's failure to consult honourably for decision to withdraw from National Energy Board review

BELLA COOLA, BRITISH COLUMBIA (April 5, 2012) - A number of Hereditary Chiefs and elders of the Nuxalk First Nation of Bella Coola have counseled their elected Chief and Council to withdraw as intervenors from the National Energy Board's Joint Review Panel Process for the Enbridge Gateway oil tanker and pipeline project. They say the federal government has already predetermined its approval of the project.

The Nuxalk are the second First Nation to pull out of the pipeline review process in recent months, while other nations have refused to intervene all together. The withdrawal is another sign that the federal government is mishandling its relationship with First Nations, including its statements last week that it will change the rules for the Enbridge pipeline hearings retroactively, which is unfair and will likely further compromise the regulatory review.

Public hearings in the coastal community of Bella Bella, home of the Heiltsuk First Nation, were delayed after a peaceful community demonstration against the proposed Enbridge project with drumming and singing at the airport.

"There is no honour in the federal Crown's approach to consulting with First Nations on the Enbridge project," says Andrew Andy, the elected Chief of the Nuxalk Nation. "Recent statements make it clear that the Prime Minister has already decided to approve the super-tanker project that would violate First Nations' Title and Rights and put our coastal waters at risk of a major oil spill."

The Nuxalk support the decision of other Nations to oppose the process through the Joint Review Panel, but say the review is not being done in good faith and has been undermined by repeated and controversial public statements by the Prime Minister and Natural Resources Minister that suggest a predetermined approval.

"Despite our serious concern about this process, including the lack of any decision-making role for First Nations, we entered the process in good faith," says Andy. "The government's disrespectful behaviour these past months makes clear that our good faith is not being returned."

"How can we participate in a process driven by a government that has labelled us 'socially dysfunctional'?" says Charlie Nelson, a Hereditary Chief of the Nuxalk Nation, referring to recent controversial statements by Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver. "Where is the honour in the Crown stating that it's prepared to violate our constitutionally-protected Title and Rights before the work of gathering information on the scope of infringement is even done?"

The Nuxalk say the Joint Review Panel has no mandate to consult with First Nations, and there has been no clarity provided by the federal government about how it will consult on issues that fall outside of the Joint Review Panel process.

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