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B.C. ENVIRONMENT MINISTER WARNED ABOUT LNG GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Internal briefing note singles out methane as concern, as well as emissions from fracking process

British Columbia Environment Ministry staff have warned their minister that the province's dreamed-of liquefied natural gas industry poses some big challenges with greenhouse gas emissions.

Internal briefing notes prepared for Environment Minister Mary Polak since she took office last year and obtained by The Canadian Press, single out methane emissions for concern.

On top of emissions from combustion and flaring of natural gas, methane and carbon dioxide escape during hydraulic fracturing process, or fracking, the documents said.

"Methane emissions are a particular concern since they have a global warming impact 21 times higher than carbon dioxide," said one July briefing note.

"A small increase in the percentage of natural gas that escapes can have a significant impact on overall emissions."

At a meeting last November, staff warned Polak that the federal government has updated its formula for calculating greenhouse gas emissions and that alone will increase methane values by 20 per cent. The province will need to follow suit, members of the Climate Action Secretariat told Polak. Emissions may be under-reported

Premier Christy Clark says B.C. is poised to develop a trillion-dollar LNG industry.

But emissions remain a hurdle for the provinces, which has legislated targets for reductions. Legislation dictates that emissions are to be reduced by at least a third below 2007 levels by 2020.

On top of emissions from combustion and flaring of natural gas, methane and carbon dioxide escape during



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hydraulic fracturing process, or fracking. B.C. estimates that between 0.3 and three per cent of natural gas extracted is lost as fugitive methane emissions, but other North American jurisdictions and scientific literature estimate that rate is between seven and eight per cent.

Polak has also been told that while B.C. estimates that between 0.3 and three per cent of natural gas extracted is lost as fugitive methane emissions, other North American jurisdictions and scientific literature estimate that rate is between seven and eight per cent.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates between four and nine per cent is lost.

However, in B.C. regulations are significantly different, the briefing notes pointed out. Because B.C. gas contains toxic hydrogen sulfide, leaks are more tightly regulated.

The province's Climate Action Secretariat and Natural Gas Development Ministry are working with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers to test technology to curb emissions, said the internal documents.

"Though significant, this work does not address concerns about potential fracking-related emissions from geological formations, poor cement casing or produced water storage tanks,"

said the briefing prepared last July. Polak declined a request for an interview.

"Based on academic research and work in the United States, there is concern that fugitive or unplanned emissions from oil and gas facilities are higher than currently reported in B.C.," the ministry said in an emailed statement to The Canadian Press.

The federal government has updated its greenhouse gas emissions formula and the province "is examining" when to update its own regulations, it said.

The Climate Action Secretariat is working with the association and industry to find ways to reduce emissions and "ensure emissions levels are properly understood," it said.

They've initiated a joint study of emissions levels and, as a result of updated information, the province has removed an outdated metering requirement, the statement said.

"International greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting and measurement practices are changing as research and the understanding of science evolves," the ministry said.

B.C. has been underestimating the impact of methane, said Tom Pedersen, executive director of the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, a collaboration between the University of Victoria, Simon

Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Northern British Columbia.

But provincial officials are very aware of the challenges, he said.

"This is not something that they are trying to sweep under the rug. They are concerned about it and they are trying to put in place appropriate regulations to deal with it," Pedersen said.

That will require intensive monitoring and enforcement of regulations, he said.

"At the same time, one does have to be realistic about this, there is pushback from industry. They would prefer not to have regulations of course."

KEYSTONE XL DELAY FRUSTRATES ALBERTA PREMIER, TRANSCANADA CEO

Alberta Premier Dave Hancock expresses disappointment at latest U.S. move to postpone decision

News of another delay in the approval process of TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline prompted the Alberta premier to issue a statement expressing his disappointment Friday.

Premier Dave Hancock reacted quickly to the news that the U.S. State Department will extend the government comment period on the controversial pipeline project.

That move will likely postpone a final decision on the project until after the Nov. 4 mid-term elections, despite an earlier signal from President Barack Obama that a decision could come before summer.

"I am disappointed in today's announcement of yet another delay in the regulatory approval process for the Keystone XL pipeline," Hancock said in a statement. "We believe the project is in North America's best interest as it provides energy security, jobs and a dependable energy source from an environmentally responsible and democratic friend and ally."

Officials said uncertainty stemming from a dispute in Nebraska over

the proposed route of the pipeline played a part in the decision to extend the commenting period.

In February, a Nebraska district judge ripped up a state law that might have been used to force landowners to allow the pipeline on their property.

That decision raised concerns the pipeline could find itself in limbo indefinitely, even if the Obama administration allows the pipeline to cross the U.S. border.

'Inexplicable' delay: Russ Girling News of Friday's delay isn't sitting well with TransCanada's president and CEO.

In an emailed statement to CBC

News, Russ Girling said he is extremely disappointed and frustrated by yet another delay.

"Not building Keystone XL is a lose, lose, lose scenario anyway you look at it." - Russ Girling, CEO, TransCanada

"Another delay is inexplicable," he said. "After more than 2,000 days, five exhaustive environmental reviews and over 17,000 pages of scientific data, Keystone XL continues to languish."

Girling said the Nebraska ruling should not have any impact on the current 90-day national interest determination period since TransCanada's approved re-routing of the pipeline remains

valid during its appeal of the ruling.

Girling also took a shot at what he called interest groups and paid activists who he says are jeopardizing Canadian and U.S. energy security and creating a situation that will actually lead to higher greenhouse gas emissions and greater public risk.

"Not building Keystone XL is a lose, lose, lose scenario any way you look at it," he said.

Drawn-out review process invites 'continuous assault'

While yet another delay in the approval process has disappointed many, a University of Calgary professor says he's not surprised given how the review

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process is structured in the U.S. "It's not being handled in a very responsible regulatory system," said Michal Moore, area director of energy and environmental policy with the University of Calgary.

"In other words, it doesn't have a formal process by which you'd hear a number of comments, you'd adjudicate them and you'd make a decision. This is just so open-ended and non-structured — it just invites kind of a loose and continuous assault." There's a 90-day period during which

U.S. government departments can raise concerns about the pipeline, before the State Department makes a final recommendation to the president, and it is that period that has been extended now.

However, even once the extended period comes to an end, officials in the Obama administration have made it clear there is no set deadline for when the State Department or the president have to make a final call.

Obama has questioned whether he is even able to approve the pipeline in light of the Nebraska court ruling.

Unless the ruling is overturned in a higher court, or every landowner on the current route signs on, or an arms-length Nebraska agency accepts the route, not even an Obama approval would get the project completed.

The State Department gave no new deadline for the delay but said it intends to continue evaluating the project.

"The permit process will conclude once factors that have a significant impact on determining the national interest of the proposed project have been evaluated," the State Department said.

For environmental groups, news of the delay "makes us more confident that the harmful Keystone XL tar sands pipeline will ultimately be rejected," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, senior vice-president of government affairs with the U.S. advocacy group League of Conservation Voters.

Despite the complications and delays, Moore says he doesn't anticipate TransCanada will give up any time soon.

He says it wouldn't make sense given how much the company has invested into the project to date.



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TransCanada's need to protect future development potential is the driving concern in its commitment to fight for Keystone XL, he said. Keystone XL is not so much about today's production needs, which can be met with the pipeline infrastructure that already exists, Moore said. "This is all about future markets," he said.

ENBRIDGE NORTHERN GATEWAY PIPELINE: SOME B.C. FIRST NATIONS SAY THERE WILL BE NO COMPROMISE

Haisla, Nak'azdli, Carrier Sekani among nations saying pipeline project threatens their way of life

Just a few miles from the spot where Enbridge Inc. plans to build a massive marine terminal for its Northern Gateway oil pipeline, Gerald Amos checks crab traps and explains why no concession from the company could win his support for the project.

Amos, the former chief of the Haisla Nation on the northern coast of British Columbia and a community leader, has argued for years that the risk — no matter how small — of an oil spill in these waters outweighs any reward the controversial project might offer.

That resolve is shared by many in the aboriginal communities along the proposed pipeline and marine shipping route who see the streams, rivers and oceans in their traditional territories as

the lifeblood of their culture. "Our connection to this place that we call home is really important," says Amos as he pulls three Dungeness crabs from his trap, tossing two in a bucket and holding the third up for his two young granddaughters, who shriek and giggle as the crustacean wriggles its legs. "If these little ones can't witness us doing what we've done for generations now, if we sever that tie to the land and the ocean, we're no longer Haisla."

The Northern Gateway pipeline would carry diluted bitumen 1,177 kilometers from Alberta's oil sands to the deepwater port in Kitimat, in northwest British Columbia, where it would be loaded on supertankers and shipped to Asia. It is expected to cost \$7.9 billion.

Like the proposed Keystone XL pipeline to the United States, Northern Gateway is loathed by environmentalists who fear it will hasten the development of Canada's oil sands and exacerbate climate change.

A Haisla woman wearing a traditional tree bark headband attends an anti-Northern Gateway pipeline protest in Kitimat on April 12, 2014. Residents of the town voted against the Northern Gateway pipeline project in a blow to Enbridge Inc.'s efforts to expedite the flow of crude from Canada's landlocked oilsands to high-paying markets in Asia. (Julie Gordon/Reuters)

But it is also fiercely opposed by many aboriginals along the

pipeline path and shipping routes. Canada's Conservative government has been strongly supportive of Keystone and Northern Gateway, though it has said it will only approve projects that are safe for people and the environment. The federal government is expected to rule on the project in mid-June. If it is approved, aboriginal groups say they will bury it in lawsuits. If that fails, they say they are willing to lay down their bodies to

protect the earth, which they see as their children's inheritance. "I am committing myself to doing whatever it takes to stop this project, short of violence," Amos said. "Myself and quite a few people are prepared to stand on the line and use ourselves to stop things if they send the bulldozers in." Protecting the land All along the pipeline route, First Nations have filed lawsuits against the Joint Review Panel's recommendation that the line

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be approved, citing a lack of consultation among other issues.

First Nations cannot veto resource projects, but governments are required to consult with them on unresolved land-claim areas. There are no treaties in much of British Columbia, so consultation claims could trap the project in court for years.

"We still have control over our territory," said Peter Erickson, hereditary chief of the Nak'azdli Nation in central British Columbia. "If we ban Enbridge from coming into the territory, they will not be allowed to come in."

Boating culture is a way of life for the Gitga'at of Hartley Bay. This photo — taken from the Tsimshian Storm — is a portrait of Hartley Bay's shoreline.

The Nak'azdli, like the Haisla, worry about the effect an oil spill would have on their waterways, particularly the Skeena River, an important salmon breeding ground.

Enbridge has said it is impossible to eliminate all risks of an oil spill, but it has developed mitigation measures to sharply reduce the likelihood, along with a preparedness and response plan to limit the consequences should a spill occur.

The company says the pipeline will be the safest it has ever built, with thicker-than-standard steel, deeper tunnels under waterways and more isolation valves than usual.

"I can't go to Alberta, I can't go to Saskatchewan, I can't go to Vancouver. If something happens to my home, where do

I go?"- Peter Erickson, hereditary chief of the Nak'azdli Nation

The federal panel that reviewed Enbridge's data and the concerns expressed by First Nations and other groups determined the project should be approved if the company meets 209 technical, environmental and social conditions.

Even a small risk is too much for Erickson. If necessary, he said, his people would take direct action, including blockades and sit-ins. They do not see such action as civil disobedience, but rather as being obedient to traditional laws.

"I was tasked with protecting this one piece of British Columbia," he said. "I can't go to Alberta, I can't go to Saskatchewan, I can't go to Vancouver. If something happens to my home, where do I go?"

Sharing the wealth Northern Gateway has some aboriginal support. Enbridge says 26 aboriginal communities have accepted its offer of a 10 per cent equity stake in the project to be divided among the 45 communities directly affected by the pipeline.

Of those, the majority were in Alberta. Just 11 of 27 eligible communities in British Columbia have signed on.

Enbridge's proposal to build a pipeline that would carry petroleum from the Alberta oilsands to the West Coast has communities arguing over potential benefits and environmental risks. Enbridge, whose Hardisty, Alta., storage facility is shown above, is Canada's largest transporter of crude oil.

(Larry MacDougal/Canadian Press)

Rumours that Enbridge is offering a larger stake in an effort to sway decisions have swirled among aboriginal groups, though Enbridge's head of the project, Janet Holder, downplays them.

"We're continuing to engage in how we can partner with [First Nations] in other ways that will add benefits," she said, adding that the company does not negotiate in the media.

Communities that have taken a stand

against the project are adamant that their answer will always be "no."

"You could offer us 100 per cent, and people still won't want the pipeline," said Terry Teegee, tribal chief of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, an alliance of eight British Columbia bands, six of which are on the pipeline right-of-way.

"Money isn't what's going to determine whether we approve the project or not. It's our land, it's our water, and that is completely not up for negotiation."



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A culture at risk
 Back on the waters of the Douglas Channel, Amos's son Trevor pulls up in a small fishing boat, a freshly shot seal on the seat next to him. The two little girls, who are four and five, clamber to the edge of the boat to stare at the dead animal, its chest sliced open and the cavity emptied.

A large seal can feed eight families or provide many meals for one family. The Haisla use every bit of the animal from the neck down: The thick fat and rich meat are eaten, while the pelt is treated to make drum skins.

A newly-made totem pole lays on the ground in Hartley Bay, an isolated village on B.C.'s north coast, accessible only by air and water. The Gitga'at of Hartley Bay, like the Haisla of Kitimaat, say their way of life would be severely threatened by having bitumen-laden oil tankers navigate nearby in Douglas Channel. (Jonathan Hayward/Canadian Press)

The small community is not opposed to all development. It has prospered thanks to the local aluminum smelter, and villagers have granted a major energy company permission to build a liquefied natural gas plant on their land.

For the Haisla, it is about more than food. Many fear that if they were to lose their fishing grounds to an oil spill, their language and traditions would also slip away. "When you're going out to collect the seafood, that's when you're exercising your culture," said Haisla chief Ellis Ross.

"You're teaching the next generation — this is where you go to fish, this is how you fish, this is why you fish — that's our connection. It's more than just a food product."

B.C. RESCINDS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT EXEMPTION

Government flip flops, admits it failed to consult First Nations
 In a stunning about-face, Environment Minister Mary Polak has rescinded the environmental assessment exemption for prospective sweet natural gas processing plants and all-season ski resorts only a day after it was announced.

"The word from my elders is you treat people kind. You treat them with respect even when they're stabbing you in the back" - Fort Nelson First Nations' Chief Sharleen Gale

In a written statement, Polak acknowledges First Nations were not adequately consulted about the proposed change prior to her Tuesday announcement.

The order would have exempted prospective year-round ski resorts and new sweet natural gas plants in B.C. from the Environmental Assessment process.

Polak said the decision was made in order to eliminate the duplication created by a similar environmental assessment process within the Ministry of Forests and Lands.

First Nations reacted angrily to Tuesday's announcement.

Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs Grand Chief Stewart Philip said the government had "effectively declared war on all BC First Nations and jeopardized all LNG discussions throughout the entire Province of BC."

He branded the decision, "a stunningly stupid move."

The Fort Nelson First Nation orders Industry representatives out of an LNG conference Wednesday after Environment Minister Mary Polak exempted natural gas plants and all-season ski resorts from the environmental assessment process. On Wednesday, Polak reversed the decision. (Bob Chamberlain/youtube)

In Fort Nelson, First Nations drummed the government and industry out of a Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) conference following an impassioned speech from Fort Nelson Chief Sharleen Gale.

"The word from my elders is it doesn't matter how they treat you," she told the conference from the podium.

"You treat people kind. You treat them with respect even when they're stabbing you in the back. So I respectfully ask government to please remove yourself from the room."

Shortly after government officials left,



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the industry was also asked to leave. In her statement, Polak apologizes for the oversight. "I would like to acknowledge First Nations' concerns about amendments to the Reviewable Projects Regulation under the Environmental Assessment Act. Our government apologizes for failing to discuss the amendment with First Nations prior to its approval."

Polak says the government will not proceed with the regulatory change until First Nations have been consulted. She says the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers has also been made aware of the decision.

GAS PLANT NEAR EDSON FIRST LEAKED SULFOLANE IN 2008

A plant near Edson that is now the focus of an advisory from Alberta Health Services leaked unsafe levels of sulfolane six years ago, CBC News has learned.

On March 12, Alberta Health Services advised residents near the South Rosevear Gas Plant not to drink their well water after a monitoring well tested high for sulfolane, a chemical used to remove compounds from sour gas.

Provincial government officials now confirm that the same plant leaked sulfolane in 2008, but Alberta Environment spokeswoman Katrina Bluetchen says her department wasn't told about it until 2012.

However, no sulfolane was detected in tests in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

"So at that point there was no report to follow-up on," Bluetchen said. A report from 2009 could not be found, even though companies are supposed to submit one each year.

Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. James Talbot says the 2008 leak is why the advisory included all homes within a five kilometre radius of the plant, because it may have had time to spread further.

"We were sure that the exposure had been at least weeks to months," he said. "And that there was the potential that it could have been years."

The earlier leak was not mentioned on last month's health advisory. Wildrose health critic Heather Forsyth says that's unacceptable.

"It's incumbent upon the government to let people know how long they knew about it, what have they been doing, and how are they going to fix it," she said.

Bonavista Energy bought the South Rosevear Gas Plant from Suncor in 2010.

Bonavista says the current leak — which has 125 times the interim Health Canada guidelines for safe sulfolane levels — started before they took over.

Investigators from the Alberta Energy Regulator are now trying to determine the cause and the size of the leak, a process that will take months.

Alberta Health will keep the advisory in effect until they receive more information.

The advisory will remain in effect while the investigation is underway.

SUNCOR ENERGY EMPLOYEE KILLED AT FORT MCMURRAY WORKSITE

Man pronounced dead in hospital, Suncor says

A Suncor Energy employee has been killed at the company's Fort McMurray oilsands site.

In a statement released late Sunday afternoon, the company said emergency personnel had responded at roughly 11:30 a.m. MT Sunday after an employee was severely injured while working.

The employee was transported

to the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre where he was pronounced dead.

"This is devastating news and a tragic loss for family, friends and co-workers," said Mark Little, executive vice-president of Suncor. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to loved ones during this extremely difficult time."

Suncor is working with the RCMP and Alberta Occupational Health and Safety to complete a full investigation into the incident.

The name of the individual is not being released.

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 OILFIELD ROAD MAP of NORTHEASTERN BRITISH COLUMBIA
 OILFIELD ROAD MAP of GRANDE PRAIRIE REGION