

News Release

Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal Joint Review Panel Announces Public Hearings

Halifax, May 1, 2007 – The Joint Review Panel for the Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal Project today announced that public hearings will begin on Saturday, June 16, 2007 at the Digby Pines Conference Centre in Digby, Nova Scotia. The Panel expects to conduct hearings over a two week period.

Groups or individuals interested in making a presentation at the hearings are asked to reserve a date and time by contacting the Panel Secretariat at 902-564-2759. A schedule listing the order of registered participants will be available on the opening day of hearings.

The Panel gave careful consideration to hearing location and believes that it is important to remain in the project area for the public hearings. The Panel has therefore confirmed Digby Pines as the venue for the duration of hearings.

Panel Chair Dr. Robert Fournier said hearings will be an excellent opportunity for the public to provide input on the implications of the project, before the Panel submits its findings to Federal and Provincial Environment Ministers.

“We want to ensure that we consider the views and analyses of stakeholders. Public hearings provide a forum for continued input from the community.”

Public hearings will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 16 with opening remarks by the Panel and a presentation by the project proponent Bilcon of Nova Scotia. The presentation by Bilcon will be followed by questions from the Panel. Presentations by government departments and agencies will be heard throughout the first week of hearings and interested parties will then present over the remainder of the hearing schedule. The Panel will reserve time between presentations to ask questions and allow others in attendance to do the same. The last day of the hearing schedule is reserved for presenters with closing remarks.

The Panel has prepared operational procedures for the conduct of the public hearings which can be found on the Panel's website at www.wpq-jointreview.ca or by contacting the Panel Secretariat at 902-564-2759.

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Media may contact:
Debbie Hendriksen
902-564-2759

Communiqué

La Commission d'examen conjoint du projet de carrière et de terminal maritime de Whites Point annonce la tenue d'audiences publiques

HALIFAX, le 1^{er} mai 2007 – La Commission d'examen conjoint du projet de carrière et de terminal maritime de Whites Point a annoncé aujourd'hui que les audiences publiques débuteront le samedi 16 juin 2007 au centre des congrès de Digby Pines, à Digby, en Nouvelle-Écosse. La Commission prévoit tenir des audiences pendant deux semaines.

On demande aux groupes et aux particuliers intéressés à faire une présentation de s'inscrire auprès du secrétariat de la Commission en composant le 902-564-2759, afin de fixer une date et une heure d'audience. Le calendrier indiquant l'ordre des présentateurs inscrits pourra être consulté lors de la première journée des audiences.

La Commission a porté une attention toute particulière au lieu où se tiendront les audiences et croit qu'il serait important de rester dans la zone du projet pour la tenue des audiences. La commission a donc confirmé que Digby Pines serait le lieu où se tiendront toutes les audiences.

Monsieur Robert Fournier, président de la Commission, a affirmé que les audiences seront pour le public l'occasion privilégiée de faire des commentaires sur les répercussions du projet avant que la Commission ne présente ses conclusions aux ministres fédéral et provincial de l'Environnement.

« Nous voulons nous assurer de prendre en compte les points de vue et les analyses des intervenants. Les audiences publiques servent de tribune à cet important échange d'information soutenu avec la collectivité. »

Les audiences publiques débuteront à 9 h le samedi 16 juin par la présentation d'observations préliminaires de la Commission et par une présentation de la part du promoteur du projet, Bilcon of Nova Scotia. La présentation par le promoteur sera suivie d'une période de questions de la Commission. Les présentations effectuées par les ministères et les organismes gouvernementaux auront lieu au cours de la première semaine des audiences et les parties intéressées feront leur présentation au cours des jours qui suivront. La Commission réservera du temps entre les présentations pour poser des questions et permettre aux autres participants d'en faire autant. La dernière journée des audiences sera consacrée aux présentateurs chargés des observations finales.

La Commission a élaboré les procédures opérationnelles pour la tenue des audiences publiques. Elles peuvent être consultées sur le site Web de la Commission au www.wpg-jointreview.ca ou en communiquant avec le secrétariat de la Commission au 902-564-2759.

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Renseignement aux médias :

Debbie Hendriksen
902-564-2759

PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

1 INTRODUCTION

This document outlines procedures for public hearings to be conducted by the Joint Review Panel (the Panel) appointed by the Ministers of Environment for Canada and Environment and Labour for Nova Scotia to review the proposed Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal Project.

1.1 The Panel will conduct public hearings in a manner that ensures a thorough examination of all matters relevant to its mandate. In addition, it will encourage public input, as directed by the Joint Panel Agreement (2003) between the respective Ministers for Canada and Nova Scotia. The Panel will hold public hearings in the project area as detailed in the Panel's announcement of May 1, 2007.

1.2 The objective of the public hearings is:

- (a) to provide an opportunity for the project proponent, Bilcon of Nova Scotia Corporation (Bilcon), to explain the proposed project and respond to concerns and questions raised by the Panel and other participants in the hearings;
- (b) to enable government representatives and interested parties to provide their views on the implications of the proposed project; and,
- (c) to facilitate the receipt of information by the Panel so that it may properly address all factors identified in the Joint Panel Agreement and detailed in the Panel's Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines (March 2005), thereby permitting it to properly prepare a report for submission to the Ministers.

1.3 These procedures are intended to ensure that the public hearings take place in a fair and equitable manner, with maximum co-operation and courtesy. The Panel Chair will maintain order and efficiency in a structured atmosphere consistent with the procedures outlined in this document. However, the hearings will not conform to the strict rules of procedure and evidence required in a court of law which would require witnesses to offer evidence under oath. The Panel encourages individuals and groups to speak on their own behalf and to ask their own questions during the hearings. Representation by legal counsel is generally discouraged. The Panel considers the hearings to be an essential part of the review process, and will give careful consideration to all submissions, both oral and written.

1.4 The Panel Chair has the discretion to alter or waive specific procedures if, in the Panel's opinion, hearing objectives might be better met with that change.

2 PROCEDURES

The Panel has adopted the following procedures for the hearings:

2.1 General

2.1.1 Persons wishing to make a presentation are asked to register at least 10 calendar days in advance of the start of hearings by contacting the Panel Secretariat, at the coordinates found at the end of this document.

2.1.2 Persons who fail to register in advance may register immediately prior to or even during a hearing session but will only address the Panel at the discretion of the Panel Chair, and if time allows.

2.1.3 The Panel encourages participants to provide brief written summaries of their presentations in advance, while participants scheduled for thematic sessions are requested to provide written summaries (hard copy and electronic) to the Panel Secretariat 10 days in advance of their scheduled presentation.

2.1.4 Some participants may choose to submit a written brief without making a formal presentation. In that case, the written brief should be sent to the Panel Secretariat 10 days prior to the start of hearings so that the Panel and other participants may consider this information during the hearing process.

2.1.5 Participants making presentations at the hearings may be asked questions by the Panel, Bilcon and other participants for the purpose of clarification. Presentations will normally be followed by a question and answer session directed by the Panel.

2.1.6 All submissions to the Panel will be entered into the project's public registry.

2.1.7 Presenters are encouraged to bring an electronic copy plus three hard copies of any additional documentation (for example, slideshows) they intend to present as part of their scheduled presentation.

2.1.8 The hearings will include the following:

a) The Panel Chair will deliver opening remarks at the start of hearings.

b) Bilcon will present its proposed project. This presentation will be limited to two hours and is intended to provide a detailed description of the project.

c) Bilcon will present its environmental assessment in a series of presentations to be scheduled by the Panel.

d) Presentations will be made by Government Departments and Agencies during the first week of hearings. The Panel will conduct thematic sessions to explore specific issues in depth. Topics include hydrogeology, marine environment and socioeconomics. Each Department or Agency presentation will normally be limited to 30 minutes.

e) The Panel will hear presentations from registered participants. Each will be held to a maximum 15 minute or 30 minute presentation time. More than one individual may participate in a presentation by a group but when several individuals are involved the collective presentation must take place within the assigned time period. Additional time may be granted at the discretion of the Panel Chair.

f) In the event that presentations by registered participants conclude before the second to last day of hearings, the Panel may choose to declare a break and adjourn the hearings until closing remarks on the final day of hearings.

g) The final day of the public hearings will be reserved only for closing remarks by participants, Bilcon and the Panel. At this time, presenters should be summarizing their views rather than bringing forward new information. Only previous presenters will be permitted to make closing remarks, which will be limited to 15 minutes per presentation.

2.2 Questioning

2.2.1 All persons making presentations at the hearings may be asked questions by the Panel, Bilcon and other participants for the purposes of clarification. The question process during the hearings will allow the Panel and all other participants to gather information and explore issues related to the potential environmental effects of the Project. The purpose of the questions should always be to elicit information that will help the Panel better understand the issues that relate directly to its mandate. All participants should pose questions in a manner that is courteous and respectful. Clarity and brevity are encouraged. The order of questioning will be at the discretion of the Panel Chair but typically the Panel will begin, followed by Bilcon, and interested parties and the public. Panel members may ask questions at any time during the hearings.

2.2.2 Questions should be directed through the Panel Chair who may subsequently allow a participant to put questions directly to the presenter. Where an individual does not adhere to the established procedures, the Panel Chair has the authority to refuse permission for further questioning.

2.2.3 The Panel Chair may limit or exclude questions or comments that fall outside the mandate of the Panel, or are deemed to be repetitive, irrelevant, or immaterial.

2.2.4 The Panel Chair may limit any discussion that exceeds the assigned time limit.

2.3 Close of Hearings

No new information will be considered by the Panel following the close of public hearings.

2.4 Interpretation

English and French interpretation services will be provided during the hearings.

2.5 Audio Visual Equipment

If audio-visual equipment is required for a specific presentation, the presenter should inform the Panel Secretariat not less than 10 days before the presentation date. Presenters must ensure that all presentation materials, including audio-visual aids, are setup to fall within the allotted time periods.

2.6 Posted Schedule

A public hearings schedule listing the order of registered participants will be available at the beginning of the hearings. The schedule will be regularly updated.

2.7 Media

2.7.1 Media inquiries regarding the Panel's activities should be directed to the Panel Secretariat.

2.7.2 Media may attend the hearings and sit in the public seating area. No questions, filming, taping or photographs will be allowed in the hearing room, unless prior approval has been received from the Panel Chair. No media interviews or reporting will be allowed in the hearing room.

2.8 Transcripts

Written transcripts of each hearing day will be made available to the public within a reasonable period of time.

For further information or to register to participate in the hearings, please write or call:

Debbie Hendriksen
902-564-2759
comments@WPQ-jointreview.ca

(Aussi disponible en français)