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ROBERT FOURNIER, DECEMBER 20, 2007

Earlier this week the federal minister agreed that a proposed quarry for Digby Neck should be rejected. Last month the Provincial Government had endorsed the Review Panel's rejection of the mega quarry at Whites Point. Other broader recommendations such as the Coastal Zone Management Policy of Nova Scotia are still under consideration. Now that both Ministers have signed off on the Report, the Chairman of the Review Panel, Bob Fournier, spoke with CBC Reporter, Pam Berman, about the reasons for the decision and the response it has provoked.

Berman: On the one side we had environmentalists kinda seeing this as a huge precedent for environmental assessments generally and then on the other side people, you know, feeling that you may have gone further than you were suppose to. Tell me how you feel about walking that line.

Fournier: The panel, myself and my colleagues gave a awful lot of thought to this. You have to realize that this process has gone for over 3 years so we had a long time to think about it. We had a number of discussions as to exactly how frame this particular document. In the past, almost always, Panels that, well, if you changed your mind or if you overrule us this is what you have to do in order to let this go forward. We were so certain that this was a bad thing that it was inappropriate for that for that particular environment that we did not provide any of those mitigating recommendations at all. And I think many people pointed to that and that was a very conscious effort on our part. We were very concerned, so we were very clear and unequivocal. The second point has to do with the fact that the decision hinges on core values. Up until now many of these decisions have been made on the basis of rocks and trees and animals, and so forth. What they've ... A lot of times they have ignored the fact that people are part of that environment. The echo system is involved with people. People interact with it, they interact with the animals, they interact with nature in many ways, and this so called VEC, or valued ecological component, is well accepted in the assessment literature. It's just that the social part of it doesn't appear very often, so what we did is we emphasized the fact that this community is unique in many ways. This is a community that has defined itself before the assessment began as environmentally oriented and it defined itself in such a way as that there really was not very much room there for a quarry as was being proposed. And the other thing that you have to realize too in one of these assessment processes is what you are looking for is significant adverse environmental effects. That phrase is a very critical phrase. What it means is that you are dealing with something that can't be mitigated, can't be adjusted. And so when you look around at a quarry or a pit or a, some other kind of business, what you're asking yourself this even if the company or product or initiative comes forward are we able to mitigate it in some way? And many of the things that we were dealing with, I thought, had the potential to be mitigated. The one that absolutely couldn't be adjusted was this business of core values and the social component. It would have had such an effect on that environment that it would have changed it forever, and for us that was the determining factor. Now you mentioned that there were critics as

well. Yes, there were people who said this was inappropriate, but I think it was only inappropriate if you judged it against previous reports, because previous reports hadn't done this. What we are saying is those previous reports could have done this or perhaps should have done this looking at the social component, you see.

Berman: Besides the project itself, you went beyond, you know, beyond that and made recommendations for coastal management zone, a monitorium until that zone was set up, and there was some questions about that. Why did you go there?

Fournier: That has surprised me quite a bit. For us, the Panel, we felt that that was a natural thing to do. Remember, this is a project that involved an ocean component which was ship transported as materials as well as a land component. So it is very much a coastal zone issue. We felt that if there was a coastal zone policy present in the Province now this thing might never have come to an assessment. In other words, it might have been decided much much earlier, simply because it didn't fit into that environment or did, you see what I mean. That is what a coastal zone policy does. It says, this is how we are going to use the coastal zone, this is what we expect the coastal zone to do for us, this is how we will allow things to happen and other things not to happen. We suggested that the process that we had just gone through, and spent three years on, had come about because of that absence, and if it was there it wouldn't have happened. So we think Okay, by extension that policy should exist because there will be more attempts to open quarries and so forth. The second thing is we strongly urged a monitorium because we felt that why go through this process again in an ad hoc way when if you put a policy together everybody knows what to expect and you don't have to spend time and money and effort, and also remember there is a lot of social anxiety here, people get stressed out in the extreme, and as a result why go through that, let's plan ahead. You know, Nova Scotia is an island, essentially, with a small connection to the main land. It has been associated with the ocean forever, and there are at least a hundred jurisdictions in the world that have coastal zone policies and we don't. You got to ask yourself, I means, what are we waiting for?

Berman: Were you surprised that they are still considering that, knowing that recommendations have been rejected, or just sitting on them.

Fournier: What I am saying to them is this is what we think you should responsibly do, but I also recognize, to be fair, they have pressures coming from all different ways. I am hopeful that they will recognize, I mean, in the Speech from the Throne that came out a month or so ago, it said that they will develop a policy over the next little while, two years I think it is. I took that as a positive note. Whether they will call a monitorium or not, remains to be seen, but I think that will be the responsible thing to do. Why put the community and the whole Province through this again simply because we have not done our homework properly.

Berman: Thank you very much

Fournier: Thank you