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**FOR INFORMATION**

06-000000-000

**BRIEFING NOTE**

Health Canada involvement in the Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal Joint Panel  
Review

**ISSUE:** Health Canada has been requested to present its views on environmental effects associated with the proposed Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal Project including comments on the adequacy of the proponent's responses on the Health Canada comments on the Environmental Impact Statement.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Proponent, Bilcon of Nova Scotia Corporation (Bilcon), is proposing to construct and operate a basal quarry, a crushing operation, and a ship loading terminal at Whites Point on Digby Neck. Digby Neck is a narrow, 30 km long peninsula which extends off the north shore of Nova Scotia into the Bay of Fundy.

In June 2003, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) referred the project to the Minister of Environment recommending referral to a panel review in accordance with section 21(b) of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). The DFO minister referring the project to panel was Hon. Robert Thibault, Liberal Member of Parliament for the Digby area (West Nova). DFO based its referral on the likelihood of the proposed project to cause environmental effects over a large area of both the marine and terrestrial environments. Additionally, the province had expressed interest to DFO in participating in a joint assessment of the project

Health Canada participated in the environmental assessment as an Expert Federal Authority. Comments were provided to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Panel Manager on August 4, 2006 in the following areas of Health Canada expertise/advice: noise and vibration, air quality, light, drinking water, country foods and socio-economic impacts.

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It is important to note that a HC employee who was at that time acting in an advisory role with Environmental Health Assessment Services (currently called Environmental Assessment Division), Health Canada, in Ottawa, was cc:ed on an August 4, 2006 letter (**from who and to who?**) for information purposes. This HC employee had previously been involved in the project as a consultant when she was on a leave of absence from Health Canada and working for AMEC, an engineering consulting firm which was involved in a community health assessment of the quarry. When one resident of Digby County identified this HC employee as both the individual cc:ed on the HC letter and as one of the people who had participated in the community health study, a claim of conflict of interest ensued. HC prepared a letter explaining that the employee (**had no involvement or decision making authority -or whatever the letter said**). The letter was submitted to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) on September 7, 2006 and has been posted on the registry for this project.

Local residents oppose the quarry due to socio-economic and quality of life concerns over changes to the landscape and traffic that will increase as a result of the terminal. Several residents have sent letters to the Agency questioning the objectivity of Health Canada's socio-economic assessment comments. An official petition was sent to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, on October 10, 2006 by another local resident. The petition raises issues pertaining to the project background and to environmental concerns with including water quality and quality of life for local residents. This petition was sent on November 2, 2006 to the Ministers responsible for Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Transport Canada for response, and to Parks Canada Agency for information only.

### **CURRENT STATUS:**

Panel hearings will run for two weeks commencing on Saturday, June 16, 2007 in Digby, NS.

Health Canada is scheduled to present its views on the environmental effects associated with the project, including comments on the adequacy of the proponents responses to Health Canada comments on the Environmental Impact Statement at 1PM on June 19 2007. Sharon Chard, RD HECSB Atlantic will present on behalf of Health Canada. No experts will be present at the panel.

Other organizations scheduled to participate in the hearings include: Natural Resources Canada, Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, NS Transportation and Public Works, Tourism, Culture and Heritage, NS Environment and Labour, Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Municipality of Digby.

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**CONCLUSION:** Health Canada experts have reviewed the proposed project and find that the project does not pose a significant risk to human health. Additional information will be requested from the proponent related to air quality however the information requested does not pose a significant risk to human health.

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Attachment(s)

None

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