

"You Need to Have Faith" - Taggart

By Linda Harrington

County Councillors Tom Taggart and Doug MacInnes were called to the microphone to address the group of concerned citizens following an information session at the Debert Firehall. "You need to have faith," said District 10 Councillor Tom Taggart, "I have to be clear about what was being said here tonight."

In response to why council had not just said "No" to dumping fracking waters Taggart said Council had been advised by their legal counsel there was nothing in the existing by-laws to prevent them from approving an application for dumping wastewater into the municipal sewer system if the Dept of Environment had already given their approval but he wanted to assure residents this would not be the end of the process. "There is a 30 day appeal period and then Council has the right to make a final decision. A lot of our councillors have spent a lot of time on this, trying to understand and gather information," he said, again asking residents to have faith in their local councillors.

A member of the audience asked why by-laws would allow something like this and Taggart was quick to bring to light existing by-laws are currently under review. "We are making the by-laws better, so council has more authority," he said. The existing by-laws were drafted in 1966, with only a few updates.

District 9 Councillor, Doug MacInnes, clearly frustrated with previous presenters asked residents to wait for final results from Council. "Please, when these reports come back show up with as much interest as you have tonight and we will bring a chemist in here, we'll bring in an engineer and we'll answer you with facts, not with speculation, and not with rumors."

Councillor MacInnes went on to suggest it was a good idea to set up a citizen's monitoring committee to look at any community concerns. "It is time to do this and do it right," he said.

Cumberland County Councillor Lynne Welton was present at the Debert meeting, also. She informed residents Cumberland County Council had just passed a resolution against fracking and

they would be sending it out to all Municipalities in Nova Scotia. She encouraged everyone to make sure they know where their local political candidates stand on the issue of fracking prior to the next election.

Colchester County Council met on Jan. 17th and at this meeting a draft of new sewer-use by-laws was presented. The new by-laws will address emerging issues of radioactive waste materials and the discharge of NORM materials, separating County Regulations from County Policy. Definitions have been added to distinguish/identify radioactive material, NORM and waste radioactive materials. The additions to the by-laws will help bridge the gap between Provincial and Federal regulations.

Councillor MacInnes asked for definitive answers on the situation regarding the fracking wastewater at AIS in Debert. He was told the application from AIS came in before the new by-laws were drafted and therefore must be dealt with under the old by-laws. Mr. Ramesh Ummat, Director of Public Works, will present his final decision at the next Council meeting, on Jan. 31st. Following this decision, there is a 30 day appeal period and Council will make their decision on this appeal.

Mr. Ummat assured Councillor MacInnes testing on the material had been collected and analyzed by a third party and results will be presented in a report at the next meeting.

Councillor Taggart wanted clarification on the rights of the Municipality in regard to testing wastewaters from industries and Mr. Ummat confirmed this is already part of the existing by-laws and will continue, giving the Municipality the right to sample wastewaters and to install monitoring devices, flow meters, etc. at access points.

Councillor Taggart did not find the proposed fines for breaking the rules/committing an offence high enough to deter non-compliance. He asked if paying only \$50,000 fine versus paying much more in clean-up costs might sway someone to break the law. Council will look at this and other concerns before the by-laws are presented for the first reading on Jan. 31st.

Department of the Environment RESPONDS TO FRACKING WASTEWATER ISSUE

To obtain a balanced approach to the Fracking issue and handling of the fracking wastewater, Linda Harrington contacted Department of Environment, Truro office, but with the extent of her questions, she was referred the Halifax office. We wanted to ensure they were included in our balanced approach. The following is a "word-for-word" copy of the remarks received from Lori Errington, Communications Advisor, Halifax office. Ms. Errington also provided some general comments, comments about AIS in Debert and addressed matters relating to the Kennetcook site cleanup.

General

- Nova Scotians want to know that oil and gas activity is safe, closely regulated and will not harm drinking water or the environment.
- Our regulations, approvals and monitoring requirements are all designed to protect the environment and health of all Nova Scotians.

AIS in Debert:

- This government shares residents' concerns that the wastewater from Kennetcook be treated properly and the site cleaned up.
- Fracking is a complex issue and why we have taken a careful approach to it.
- Our government will not accept any applications for fracking until the review is complete.
- NS Environment has issued an approval for AIS to treat the water for naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORMs).

Kennetcook site cleanup:

- Nova Scotia Environment has conditions in place with Triangle Petroleum through an industrial approval that was renewed in late 2012.
- These conditions hold the company responsible to remove and treat the wastewater from their drilling operations and reclaim the site at Kennetcook.
- It was discovered that the water contains naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORMs) which affects how it will need to be treated and disposed of.
- The company is currently reviewing its options for treating the wastewater and we're waiting to hear how they plan on moving forward.

The following are questions asked by Linda Harrington, The Shoreline Journal with specific answers provided by Lori Errington, Communications Advisor, Department of Environment, Halifax, NS.

Q: How dangerous are the levels of chemicals in wastewaters stored in Kennetcook?

The wastewater stored in the ponds in Kennetcook has settled, so that concentrations at the bottom of the pond are higher than those at the top of the pond.

The concentrations of Naturally Occurring Radio Active Materials (NORMs) below the top layer are above federal guidelines.

These levels do not pose an immediate risk to the health of residents or the environment, but the province wants to see the wastewater treated properly.

Q: Do the levels of any chemicals in this material exceed the standards of Unconditional Release Limits (Section 5.1) outlined in the Canadian Guidelines for the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials?

The untreated wastewater that was received from Kennetcook did have levels slightly above the UDRL; however, after treatment, the levels are now below the UDRL and are being contained at AIS.

Q: Are the ponds in Kennetcook leaking and overflowing?

The ponds are not overflowing, however, there is a plan to transport more fluid to be treated at AIS. This will primarily be made up of, rainwater, as the fracking fluids have settled to the bottom of the ponds. This fluid has been tested and is already below federal standards for levels of NORMs.

Q: Are additional litres of the Kennetcook wastewater going to be transported to AIS in order to elevate the overflowing? If yes, what volume and when?

NSE has received an application for amendment to AIS' approval to allow an additional 1 million litres to be transported, treated, and contained on-site at AIS.

Q: Has DOE overseen testing of the fracking wastewaters now onsite at AIS?

NSE has received and reviewed the results of AIS's Pilot Project to treat NORMs in the fluid from Kennetcook. The treated wastewater from Kennetcook is now below the federal standards and is not being released from the AIS site.

Q: What total volume of fracking wastewater was transported to Debert?

Initially, 4.5 million litres was transported to Debert in 2009. The amended approval is for another 1 million litres.

Q: Has DOE given AIS a permit to treat the fracking wastewater? Under what guidelines?

AIS is already approved to treat wastewater from industrial activities, as long as the contents of the wastewater fall within the terms and conditions of its approval. This can include fracking wastewater.

AIS could not initially treat the Kennetcook water because the NORMs present in the water were not approved for treatment in Debert. There are terms and conditions in the approval to protect the health of Nova Scotians and their environment.

NSE gave AIS an approval in August of 2012 for a pilot project to treat the wastewater from Kennetcook for NORMs. The pilot project was completed in November. AIS has asked to ship another million litres of the Kennetcook wastewater to be treated in Debert.

The terms of the approval still do not allow for the release

of the treated wastewater, so it must be held on site.

Q: Are you satisfied the fracking wastewaters stored at AIS present no danger to public/industrial wells in the area, should a leak occur at Debert?

NSE does not have any concerns about the wastewater from Kennetcook stored at AIS.

It is primarily salt water, with a very small amount of chemicals from fracking that are mostly settled at the bottom of the holding pond.

Q: Are the levels of the wastewater contained in the Debert ponds currently below the "agueous" standards of Unconditional Release Limits (Section 5.1) outlined in the Canadian Guidelines for the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials?

Yes

Q: How often does DOE monitor activities at AIS?

Our staff are in frequent contact with AIS through email, phone and visits to the site.

Q: The "radioactive" elements in the fracking wastewater are what heighten the public concern. The fears are based on the half-life of materials, the suggestion we will never be able to totally get rid of them and the concentration of these elements in pond sludge and residual sludge resulting from treated wastewater. What testing has DOE done on the sludge? Are these levels of concern? Do the levels fall below the "solid" standards Unconditional Release Limits (Section 5.1) outlined in the Canadian Guidelines for the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials? How will this sludge material be disposed of?

The levels of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials were only ever slightly above federal guidelines, with levels being higher in the sediment at the bottom of the ponds. The levels of radiation from these materials are so low they would not register on a Geiger counter. They are not a concern for the health or safety of residents, but as a precaution, NSE is ensuring these fluids are treated properly.

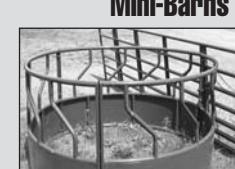
AIS has successfully demonstrated that it can treat the wastewater and lower NORMs to well below federal standards. The sludge would have to be stored in isolation and sent away for treatment at an approved facility.

Currently, the wastewater would be held until an appropriate disposal plan is put into place.

Q: This is a quote from a petition to stop the release into the sewer system... "The waste contains 11 radioactive substances, including U-238, Thorium, Radium and Lead in addition to unidentified toxic substances used in the process of hydraulic fracturing. The substances would flow into Chignoos River and ultimately Minas Basin with unknown impacts on human health and the ecosystem....can you comment on the validity of such a statement.

The content of the wastewater at Debert does not pose a threat to the health of Nova Scotians or their environment. NSE has no concerns about the potential of the treated wastewater to harm the ecosystem if released into the sewage system.

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