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June 8, 2015

SUMMARY #11

Rio Tinto Alcan Environmental Appeal Board (EAB) Hearings

KITIMAT – Kitimat Rod and Gun Association, 86 Haisla Blvd. | Kitimat BC | V8C 2B7

Hearings continued in Kitimat on June 8 with testimony from Greg Paoli, Principal at Risk Sciences International, a consulting firm hired by Rio Tinto Alcan (RTA) to analyze what risk an increase in emissions poses to Kitimat residents. Mr. Paoli's risk assessment is part of the Sulphur Dioxide Technical Assessment Report (STAR).

Mr. Paoli's modeling concluded that RTA's 55 percent increase in sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions would result in 150 to 200 respiratory responses per year among asthmatics. These respiratory responses would range in severity from unnoticeable to hospitalization. However, the methodology used in the model did not predict the proportion of severity among respiratory responses. The appellants questioned how a level of risk could be determined without knowing the proportion of respiratory responses resulting in hospitalization versus the proportion of unnoticeable responses. The appellants further questioned the study's assumptions about the number of Kitimat residents currently suffering from asthma and where those residents exercise.

The study did not assess the impact of SO₂ emissions on the development of asthma on the basis that the scientific literature has yet to establish a conclusive causal link between the two. RTA deems this uncertainty justification to not include asthma onset in the scope of the risk assessment. The appellants argued that the assumptions made in the analysis and the scoping out of asthma onset could result in a much higher level of risk than predicted.

Mr. Paoli testified that a precautionary approach could be used given the assumptions in the risk assessment and that the risk assessment is done to help inform the decision maker. In this case, the decision maker (the Ministry of Environment) decided that it is justified for RTA to increase harmful SO₂ emissions when it is not clear what the impacts will be. The appellants say this approach is similar to conducting a science experiment upon residents of Kitimat to understand how SO₂ affects human health.

June 8 Witnesses:

- Greg Paoli, Principal Risk Scientist with Risk Sciences International
- Dr. Juliane Ahern, Associate Professor at Trent University & Canada Research Chair in Environmental Modelling

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