

House of Commons e-petition calls for Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Approval to be Denied

Delta September 16 2020

Gotcha! New Access-to-Information findings reveal yet another federal government cover-up, this one involving the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 (RBT2) project.

In August 2019, the Review Panel asked government agencies, stakeholders and the public to submit closing remarks, prior to them closing the record on the RBT2 project and retiring to write their report and recommendations. The panel made it very clear these final submissions not contain any new information, but rather a summation of key findings and recommendations.

Environment Canada answered the call, as did many others, including the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA). Whilst many submissions made it through to the Panel, one was missing and that was Environment Canada's.

We have long suspected Ottawa bureaucrats were altering, dumbing-down and withholding reports from Environment Canada scientists investigating the (RBT2) project. Now we have proof. Through an Access to Information request we have now uncovered the closing remarks Environment Canada scientists wrote and submitted to their Ottawa bosses for approval.

That submission never got to the Review Panel. Someone in Ottawa withheld it. So, who in Ottawa decided to withhold the scientists' submission and why? Was it someone in the Environment Ministry; someone in the Transport Ministry; was it senior Ottawa bureaucrats; was it the Prime Minister's office, or was it someone else?

Environment Canada scientists' closing submission, intended for the Review Panel, was written and sent to Ottawa well ahead of the end of August Panel deadline. That submission never reached the Panel.

The Access to Information request reveals a damning summary of the RBT2 project. Authored by Environment Canada, it underlines the scientists' concerns, one being that RBT2 constitutes an unmitigable species-level risk to Western Sandpipers and shorebirds more generally. That submission would have provided the Review Panel a different picture, showing that Environment Canada scientists were right all along in stating that the RBT2 will result in significant adverse environmental effects that cannot be mitigated. It would clearly demonstrate RBT2 is extremely damaging to the Robert's Bank ecosystem. Armed with that report the Panel could well have recommended that the RBT2 project approval be denied.

"It's like someone in Ottawa, having read the report, said WOW! If this gets out it could be the end of the RBT2 project", stated Roger Emsley, Executive Director Against Port Expansion Community Group. He then went on to say "So rather than letting it go forward to the Panel and for them to take it into consideration, someone in Ottawa decided to bury it".

The newly released material reveals Ottawa bureaucrats attempting to influence the Environment Canada scientists, with clear evidence those proposing changes were trying to alter or dumb down the scientists' recommendations. In one change they say references to scientific material are not permitted, which is not true. In another they question whether certain mitigation needs to be operational and tested prior to construction. When the Environment Canada scientists refused to back down someone in Ottawa made the decision that this Panel submission was too damaging to the project to go forward and therefore decided to bury it.

The Environment Canada final submission to the Review Panel was withheld, yet the final report from the VFPA sailed through to the Panel, where it was used to discredit and disparage the Environment Canada scientists.

With Environment Canada's report in the public domain it is clear Environment Minister Wilkinson has no choice. He has to recommend to Cabinet the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 project be turned down on environmental issues. Let us hope he makes the right and responsible decision.

To see the Environment Canada Report or for more information visit www.againstportexpansion.org or email Roger Emsley at info@againstportexpansion.org

APPEALS PRESENTED