

# Clearing up concerns

## *Local residents want guarantees new refinery won't impact air quality*

By **KIRK SQUIRES**

Residents of the Isthmus region have concerns about the potential effects a proposed second refinery for Placentia Bay may have on their air quality.

Residents had the opportunity to voice those concerns to representatives of Newfoundland and Labrador Refining Corporation at a public meeting Jan. 16 in Sunnyside.

Sunnyside councillor Robert Snook is one of those residents who wants some air quality guarantees from the company.

He says he doesn't want to see a repeat of what happened back in the 1990s when Cumberland Farms owned the Come By Chance refinery.

Snook was part of the clean air coalition formed in the area back then to force improvements to the refinery. At the time, he says, the air quality in the region was deplorable.

"I don't want to go through that again.

"We have come a long way since and I credit North Atlantic."

Snook says at the time the

clean air coalition was necessary and improvements to air quality would have been longer coming without it. That, he says, is because the provincial environment department of the day was simply not on side.

"They were not an ally. We were fighting with them as much as we were fighting with the refinery."

That's why for this new refinery Snook wants to see an air quality model that takes into account all the variables that are particular to the Isthmus region with its two bays.

"The model is only going to be as good as the data you put into it. I really want to see some research, perhaps even using some of the information that the Hibernia people collected when they were first getting ready to do the project out there."

To date Snook is encouraged by the openness of NLRC.

"They have been fantastic. I am really impressed. I hope they continue because they are really up front and approachable and there seems to be no back doors with them."

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# New liaison committee in planning stages, says Dalton

By **KIRK SQUIRES***(Continued from page A1)*

Sunnyside councillor Robert Snook says there is currently no plan to form a clean air coalition with respect to the proposed refinery but he would like to see a liaison committee set up between NLRC and communities in the region.

Sunnyside has already appointed two people to be on such a committee.

"We are just getting ahead of it because we are hoping they NLRC will set it up."

Newfoundland and Labrador Refining Corporation director Brian Dalton says a liaison committee is already in the planning stages.

"That will be critical. Quite frankly there is a tonne of knowledge in the local area. People know what they don't want," says Dalton.

He notes the company is still a couple of months away from having a quantifiable air quality model in place. But the objective is not just to come in under the federal/provincial regulations, but come in well below those regulated standards.

"It's an important one for us. The models have to take in everything from topography to historical wind patterns."

Dalton says there has been an incredible amount of research done in the area over the years.

"I don't think there is anything that has been prepared, that is public, for either Bull Arm to NTL and any work

done around the Bay that we haven't tapped into for the environmental processes.

"If you look at the filing documents, we piggy backed off a lot of existing work; where we saw holes or things that needed to be updated that is really where our own surveys have come in."

## Priorities

All elements of the environmental study are important but Dalton says two big issues are priorities for them —the Bay and the air.

"These are the ones that could break the project if we don't deliver a project that satisfies. We have known that from the get go.

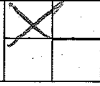
"For the first few months we put a lot of emphasis on the Bay. With the feasibility study completed there is a refinery we can model. We know what kind of crude goes in, we know what the products are and we can start to model. The Bay was actually easier to start because it was more general oil spill related issues and fisheries interactions.

"I am thinking April we should have the final model there. The goal is come in well under any provincial or federal regulations."

NLRC is currently collecting data and meeting with fishermen about how traffic and wharf impacts are best mitigated.

"We are also signing onto the Smart Bay program. We are sponsoring an extra buoy in

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## New liaison committee in planning stages

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the Bay. That will help us in the short-term with data collection . . . in terms of winds and tides. We have also started dialogue with the other players in the Bay about scales of economy and what can be done to improve things."

### Go date

With the mandated environmental timelines in place Dalton says the earliest the company could get the go ahead from an environmental perspective is late September/October.

"The detailed engineering is proceeding with that timeline in mind." Securing the financing will be another major milestone for the proposed refinery. Dalton says it is impossible to finalize financing agreements until they have environmental clearance to proceed.

"There is a lot of skepticism in the marketplace," he says. "We did a feasibility study to show the project stacks up economically but that's cold comfort to the investment community, potential partners and everyone else unless there is an environmental and social license attached to the project.

"It is one thing for people to know we are open and really trying to incorporate the best advice we can get locally. But . . . issues around air quality, and what will be the increased risk as far as Placentia Bay goes, are vital. We have been open but if we don't have a project that answers those questions to people's satisfaction, there is no go.

"It doesn't hurt when you think about just how educated people are about oil refineries, shipping and vessels and spill risks. We are in a situation where there is an awful lot of local knowledge."

In the meantime NLRC is talking to potential partners covering everything from crude, to direct partnership, to product off take.

"It is something we really couldn't get going on until we had the feasibility study in hand.

"We started the process in December, when we finished the feasibility study, with a fairly big list and that's narrowing in on the key contenders now."

The price tag for the refinery is still in the \$4.5 billion range.