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Ontario Rivers Alliance Intervening in Energy East Pipeline Hearing

SUDBURY -- The National Energy Board has granted Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) intervenor status in panel hearings regarding the Energy East Pipeline application.

ORA chairperson Linda Heron said the announcement indicates how much progress the volunteer organization has made since it was formed to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems.

"Like many other Canadians, our members have serious concerns about the potential for spills and leaks in an aging pipeline that was designed to transport natural gas and would now be converted to move diluted bitumen," said Heron. "Our research indicates that Energy East uses insufficient leak detection technology to effectively monitor the pipeline's integrity, and that any single spill could cause irreparable damage to one or more of over two thousand water bodies along the pipeline route."

"This is simply a disaster waiting to happen. The proponent promises their leak detection system (LDS) can detect spills of over 1.5% of full flow, and will allow them to shut down within 10 minutes of a suspected leak. This doesn't sound bad until you do the math - 1.5% of full flow on a 42" pipeline would release 2,000 m³ per day, or enough to fill 16 railway tanker cars. Any spills under 1.5% cannot be detected by the LDS, and could go on for days. A review of the data indicates that leaks are usually reported by passers-by – not the LDS," said Heron.

ORA will hire experts to undertake a review and analysis of pipeline integrity, including its proposed close proximity to a natural gas line, the environmental and socio-economic impacts of pipeline ruptures, including historic data regarding spill causes, response times, and the effectiveness of clean-up measures. A comprehensive list of Ontario waterbody crossings will also be developed.

ORA is one of 337 applicants granted intervenor status by the National Energy Board, which received over 2600 applications to participate in the Energy East hearings.

More information about the Energy East hearing process is available on the ORA website blog: www.OntarioRiversAlliance.ca

ORA is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a voice for several stewardships, associations, and private and First Nation citizens who have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems.

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