

EAST MEETS WEST TO SEEK FEDS' SUPPORT FOR PIPELINE PROJECT

Regional chamber of commerce joins with Alberta counterparts to lobby government

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Miles of pipe ready to become part of the Keystone Pipeline are stacked in a field near Ripley, Okla., on Feb. 1, 2012. PHOTO: SUE OGROCKI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAINT JOHN • Two influential business networks at either end of the proposed Energy East pipeline have combined forces to lobby federal government support for the project.

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce to launch a national letter writing campaign aimed at putting pressure on Ottawa to move the proposed Energy East pipeline forward.

The federal government now won't be making a decision on the National Energy Board's assessment of the project until at least October 2019, after it was announced earlier this year that the board's review will be restarted from the very beginning.

The 21-month timeline to assess the TransCanada proposal was reset after the previous panel stepped down last year amid allegations of a potential conflict of interest.

This delay has some members of the business community concerned the support behind the project could lose momentum, said David Duplisea, CEO of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce.

"It's important that this project doesn't die a slow death, so we're trying to keep it top of mind

for everyone," he said.

"And we want those that support the pipeline to let the members of Parliament know that they support it, so that parliament can gauge the reaction and help to determine social license for this."

Saint John-Rothesay MP Wayne Long has been a vocal supporter of the project, and has thrown his support behind the initiative.

"There isn't a week that goes by where I am not involved in lobbying for it," he said in a release issued by the chamber.

"I believe in the process and hope for a positive decision once all of the stakeholders have been heard from."

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce has set up a link of its website where supporters of the pipeline project can find links to their local MP's email, that provides a pre-scripted letter to send.

The \$15.7-billion Energy East proposal would see a 4,500-kilometre pipeline carry about 1.1 million barrels of crude oil per day from Alberta and Saskatchewan to Saint John. The project would include converting an existing natural gas pipeline for use for oil, building new pipeline in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick and constructing pump stations and tank terminals required to move the crude oil from Alberta to New Brunswick, including a proposed marine terminal in Saint John to allow access to other oil markets by ship.

Premier Brian Gallant has estimated that the pipeline would create an estimated 4,550 direct and indirect jobs for the province during construction with a potential increase to New Brunswick's GDP of more than \$3 billion.