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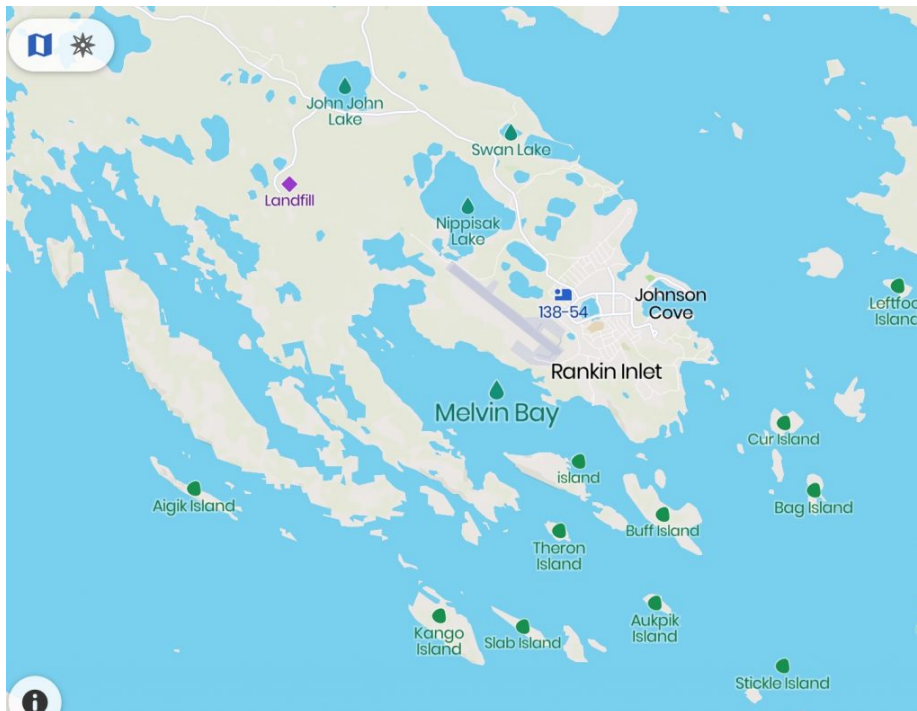
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LETTERS 6 AUGUST 2020 - 10:36 AM EDT

Agnico Eagle's water pipeline plans deserve greater scrutiny

"It is wrong for Rankin Inlet to be crash test dummies for a mining company's plans"



Agnico Eagle Mines Ltd. plans to pipe saline effluent from its Meliadine gold mine into Melvin Bay near Rankin Inlet. (File image)

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By Chris Kanaan

I have been following Agnico Eagle's Meliadine mine water discharge strategy closely as regulatory matters have unfolded, particularly since March 2020 when the company made an emergency application to the Nunavut Water Board. It has been a rather dismaying process to watch, and I am of the opinion the method the company has been using to push their proposed changes and amendments has been non-transparent and clandestine.

Without going too deeply in depths, I would like to provide Nunatsiaq News with several examples which I find both troubling and alarming. Some of these examples have been provided by the company themselves, yet, in my view, they staunchly contradict information provided to the public, particularly to those in Rankin Inlet and the Kivalliq region who may be adversely affected by the proposed changes.

Agnico Eagle did not report TDS issues in a timely matter

During the fourth quarter of 2019, Agnico Eagle released its earnings report that for the first time indicated to the public they had received a warning for exceeding limits for total dissolved solids, or TDS, in their water discharge into Meliadine Lake.

According to Agnico Eagle’s own technical records, available under “groundwater management plan,” the company was well aware of forecasted TDS issues as it noted its saltmakers at the saline water treatment plant were running at a substantially reduced capacity. Why did Agnico Eagle wait for a said emergency situation to unfold at CP-1 before notifying regulators when the problem with the saltmakers was known in the second

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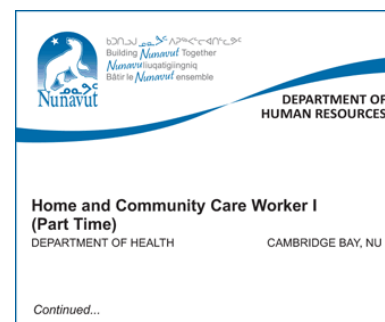
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half of 2019 and Agnico Eagle had exceeded TDS discharge allowances in October 2019?

Agnico Eagle receives permission to discharge effluent with 3,500 mg/L TDS

On May 12, 2020, Minister Dan Vandal approved the Nunavut Water Board's decision based on emergency conditions stated by Agnico Eagle. I found the decision alarming because Agnico Eagle's decision to discharge all of the water from CP-1 into Meliadine Lake was opposed by the Kivalliq Inuit Association, while Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada questioned why Agnico Eagle could not treat the water instead as they had the said capabilities to do so, according to their own technical submissions.

In Nunavut Water Board executive director Stephanie Autut's response to Nunatsiaq News, she failed to cite the opposition from the Kivalliq Inuit Association to discharging the entire contents of CP-1 into Meliadine Lake, or the cynicism as to how the TDS levels became so elevated—an issue raised by Kivalliq Inuit Association's Luis Manzo in his technical submissions and clearly reiterated by Tagak Curley.



technical reports, it may not have the capabilities to reduce TDS to acceptable levels, as their saltmakers at the saline water treatment plant have not been successful.

I am of the view that Agnico Eagle's statements suggesting there is no evidence that TDS going into a freshwater lake at its proposed levels does not impact the marine environment must not be taken at par, as the State of Alaska has completed similar studies that showed TDS levels above 2,000 mg/L does have an adverse impact on fish.

Agnico Eagle's CEO has made statements that could be debated about the proposed pipeline project during the past two quarters

On the conference call for Agnico Eagle's Q1 2020 earnings release to investors, CEO Sean Boyd stated that he believes "everybody" agrees that a pipeline at Meliadine is the best solution and that there had been no pushback against the project from Inuit groups or regulators. Of course, in the first quarter of Q1 2020, the community was mostly unaware that the company would be making an application to install a pipeline during the COVID-19 pandemic, pursuing it as a "minor modification" that the company felt would not require an assessment or public consultations.

It's now evident that there is staunch opposition against the pipeline project; there is even a petition to stop it with over 600 signatures. In Q2 2020, on the conference call, Boyd suggested that Rankinmiut's fears are not substantiated when it comes to adverse impacts to caribou from the proposed pipeline, likening it to the fears Baker Lake residents had when the mining road was

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being built. I would question Boyd's assumptions about the impact of a large-diameter pipeline across a key critical caribou migratory route.



Conclusion: What's not good for Alaska shouldn't be acceptable for Rankinmiut, Kivallirmiut or Nunavummiut and certainly not for any Canadian in 2020

I can only imagine if the proposed changes to TDS thresholds were proposed similarly in environmentally cautious Quebec, where much of Agnico Eagle's mining activity is based, let alone a twin 16-inch steel pipeline across any type of animal's migratory path. Even in Republican-held Alaska, what Agnico Eagle is proposing for Rankin Inlet and Nunavut would not be accepted under the EPA, which is typically seen as being more lax than Canadian or European standards.

I find it absolutely unfathomable that their proposed changes or recent statements are not raising more eyebrows, especially given the heightened fears and noticeable changes reported by Rankin Inlet residents regarding deteriorating Meliadine Lake water quality and

also the Government of Nunavut's recent response to Agnico Eagle's 2019 annual report, which presented scathing findings on the company's caribou management protocols.

It is wrong for Rankin Inlet to be crash test dummies for a mining company's plans; what Agnico Eagle is proposing must not be accepted without substantial evidence and certainly not completed in a rushed format as the company recently proposed.

I find it beyond audacious that the local mine manager, Frederic Langevin, recently suggested that building a twin 16-inch pipeline across a caribou migratory path to discharge significantly more saline effluent into Melvin Bay than originally planned was a "minor modification." COVID-19 must not be used advantageously by Agnico Eagle. I sincerely hope that going forward, Agnico Eagle's proposals are subjected to judicious scrutiny as other resource projects are in other jurisdictions of Canada.

Chris Kanaan
Former Rankin Inlet resident
Montreal

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(6) Comments:

Posted by Jen on 6 August, 2020

Well written

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L Posted by Taima on 9 August, 2020

“Saline effluent” sounds like nothing. But what is it? We don’t know, because it could be almost anything.

.

“Saline” means salt, as in chemistry. Too bad most students in Nunavut were not taught chemistry before Covid-19.

.

Salts usually consist of positive ions from a metal and negative ions from a non metal.

.

So saline means a mix of metals and non-metals. Those metals could include lead, mercury, cadmium, etc. The non-metals could include chlorine, arsenic, or sulphur, etc.

.

.

Effluent” is a fancy word that means liquid or semi-liquid waste. So, sort of like poop. It, again, could contain anything.

.

If it was common table salt – sodium chloride – I think they would say so, rather than hide behind saline effluent.

.

Perhaps they know what’s there and don’t want to admit it. Perhaps they don’t know what’s there. Perhaps there are so many different chemicals there that they are afraid the long list would scare us. Perhaps they figure that fear of the unknown is less than the fear would be if we knew what is really there.

.

Then there’s the “3,500 mg/L TDS”. That’s as concentrated as sea water. To the one who thinks 3,500 mg/L is acceptable, let us watch you drink a liter of sea water.

.

To the one who thinks 1,700 mg/L is OK, let us watch you drink half a liter of seawater, mixed with half a liter of water from a stream.

.

Spreading seawater on the land will kill almost everything that is growing on it and therefore everything that depends on what grows on the land. Spreading seawater

turns the land into a desert.

.

Do you want Nunavut to become a desert where nothing grows? I don't.

.

Taima.

[Reply to this message](#)

L Posted by Chris on 10 August, 2020

Taima, great response, I just want to clarify one thing:

i) the 3,500 mg/L TDS limit (up from 1,400) on the emergency ammendment basis granted by Ms. Autut's NWB in April is only for Meliadine Lake. It also gave the company the right to dump the entire Containment Pond (CP-1) into Meliadine Lake which has a natural TDS values of around 30-40 mg/L to my knowledge. The "saline water" will be much higher then the "brackish water" being discharged into Meliadine Lake.

ii) their saline water is to go to Melvin Bay. The saline water at AEM's Meliadine has TDS values around 50-60,000 mg/L which is much higher then the natural seawater in receiving habitat. The company has not provided evidence they will be successfully able to treat this water with their SETP.

iii) AEM has told locals in Rankin Inlet that snowmelt is to blame for water into Meliadine Lake from CP-1 but that is deceptive in my view. The saline water has been diluted with snowmelt but snowmelt isn't the root cause of TDS in the containment pond.

iv) Meliadine Lake discharges and Melvin Bay discharges are two separate procedures. The company sought changes on both to increase volume flows; both much higher then they stated in 2018 when they receive their water license and project certificate from the NIRB.

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Posted by Kivalliqmiut on 7 August, 2020

Yes good points. When one is bashing a company one must try find why? Have you among probably many others have had bad experience working with this company? What is the proper solution to this matter should be identified.

[Reply to this message](#)

L Posted by Chris – author on 7 August, 2020

Better not to ponder it as an individual matter as this is about Rankin Inlet and protecting the Hamlet's water supply, ecosystem and marine environment. I think the proper solution is to ensure that Agnico Eagle is held responsible and lives up to the original terms and certificates which led to a social license for the project. I think it's important to carefully analyze major project changes which were not studied that could result into harmful repercussions for the region and beyond. I have been involved in the resource sector for nearly a decade, mostly energy.

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Posted by Rankinmuit on 22 August, 2020

Chris

In your August 6 article it says you're a former Rankin resident, when did you live in Rankin and where?

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