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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

July 29, 2013

Kootenay spill fuels concern about YVR jet fuel delivery

Delta, B.C. – As cleanup continues on the Lemon Creek jet fuel spill in the Kootenays, Delta South MLA Vicki Huntington is raising a red flag over a proposal to ship the same hazardous fluid through the south bend of the Fraser River.

“Considering the damage we’ve seen from this 38,000-litre spill, the proposal to build an 80-million-litre jet fuel tank farm on the south bend of the Fraser estuary should have alarm bells ringing across the country,” says Huntington. “YVR airlines want to see ocean-going tankers traverse the river to a facility east of the George Massey Tunnel. The risk is extreme for the entire South Fraser estuary.”

The Vancouver Airport Fuel Delivery Project would service the airport via large Panamax-size tankers, a tank farm, and a pipeline through residential areas in Richmond. The proposal has faced continued opposition from the City of Richmond, Independent MLA Vicki Huntington, and community groups such as VAPOR.

“There are massive social and environmental risks in this project,” says Huntington. “On a warm day, it would be nearly impossible to contain a tanker spill in the ecologically-fragile South Fraser. Just one gallon of jet fuel will typically spread 200 to 300 feet.”

The Fraser estuary has received the UN’s RAMSAR designation for Wetlands of International Importance, says Huntington. “It’s the most important stop on the Pacific Migratory Bird Flyway, and the river supports five species of salmon,” she adds. “We’ve heard a lot of talk about world-class spill response mechanisms – but the government should not just be ‘mitigating’ risk by demanding industry best practices – we have a responsibility to follow the precautionary principle and set limits as to what is acceptable.”

Prior to the dissolution of the legislature last week, Huntington asked Minister of Environment Mary Polak to respond to concerns surrounding the project, namely those outlined in a comprehensive assessment of a similar 1989 proposal – a proposal which was ultimately rejected, due to “unacceptably high risks of damage to valuable fish and wildlife resources in the Fraser River estuary.”

The Vancouver Airport Fuel Facilities Consortium first submitted the fuel delivery proposal for a 180-day environmental assessment 2011. Huntington feels public opposition has contributed to multiple unexpected delays, including a pre-election suspension order which was said to permit the Ministry of Environment more time to review Marine and Land-Base Spill Preparedness information. Due to missing information, Huntington says the Environmental Assessment Office has not yet accepted the ministry report and the assessment is still suspended.

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