

Green light for Enbridge 9B : the NEB attempts to put an end to a sorry saga of « flip flops » on safety, conclude Citoyens au Courant

Vaudreuil-Soulanges, October 5th 2015 – A new milestone was passed in the pipeline Enbridge 9B inversion project on September 30th, when the National Energy Board (NEB) gave the green light to the project, to the stupefaction of Vaudreuil-Soulanges (VS) MRC, which is still waiting for an emergency response plan for its territory.

The NEB decision is no surprise for Citoyens au Courant (CaC), a group of citizens from VS. For almost a year, CaC have documented the shifts and technical inconsistencies of the NEB positions and decisions regarding hydrostatic testing.

When CaC initially questioned the NEB about the necessity of hydrostatic tests, vice-president Lyne Mercier said **on February 26th** during a visit to the HEC, in front of a roomful of pre-selected members of the public, that the tests were not necessary (video in French): [“With the help of our specialists, the hearings committee decided that a hydrostatic test was not the best way to determine the condition of the pipeline.”](#)

On March 26th, NEB president Peter Watson changed position in a letter published in the Montreal Gazette: [“Should the Board not be satisfied with the information provided, the Board will order Enbridge to include hydrostatic testing on all, or part, of the pipeline...”](#)

On June 18th, following a CaC information campaign for municipalities, and with the crucial support of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM), the NEB finally ordered the tests, because of the [“limitations of in-line inspection”](#). The order demanded brief, high pressure strength tests, because “these test parameters increase the benefits received from hydrostatic testing, while reducing the potential for crack growth”. [This type of test \(spike test\) has been recommended since 2014 by the US pipeline safety regulator \(PHMSA\) for existing pipelines converted for transport of unconventional oil, or for flow reversal.](#)

Then **on July 24th**, the NEB discreetly **dropped the pressure** required for the tests at the request of Enbridge. CaC contested this decision, and also the decision not to test the entire pipeline, showing that the NEB had put the interest of the pipeline operator over public safety and the environment. [The NEB defended its decision by saying that the pressure drop was consistent with the validation of in-line inspection.](#) The CMM indicates that it is satisfied with the NEB explanation for the moment.

“The NEB is the king of the *flip-flop*. It announced with great pomp and ceremony that it would do the right thing, but then *flopped* when the spotlight was turned off” says Christian Foisy from CaC. “Our position has been clear from the beginning: you can’t ensure public safety without a spike hydrotest at the right pressure, on the whole pipeline. One of the terms our elected officials agreed to on June 18th was for tests to be conducted at the right pressure. We ask that our elected officials request that the NEB and the CMM fully respect this social contract” concludes Lorraine Caron, spokesperson for CaC.