PRESS RELEASE

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**Enbridge Pipeline 9B: Another security compromise ?**

**Vaudreuil-Soulanges, 20th November 2015:** Enbridge pipelines Inc. has submitted a request to the National Energy Board (NEB) asking the regulator to compromise yet again on a safety order it handed to the company.

In the 18th June order (MO-045-2015) the NEB told Enbridge to carry out hydrostatic testing at 100% SMYS on three sections of the pipeline, and to carry out visual inspections of the pipeline in high consequence areas at least once every two weeks during operation. On July 22nd, Enbridge asked the NEB to lower the pressure for the hydrostatic tests, thereby reducing the safety margin afforded by the tests. The NEB agreed and Enbridge was allowed to conduct the tests at a reduced pressure. On September 30th, the NEB approved the test results, granting the green light for the operation of the pipeline. Then on November 13th, [Enbridge wrote to the NEB asking permission to forgo ground patrol](https://docs.neb-one.gc.ca/ll-eng/llisapi.dll/fetch/2000/130635/2857418/A73957%2D2_Condition_4a_%2D_Ground_Patrol_Plan_%2D_A4V4J3.pdf?nodeid=2856919&vernum=-2) and instead increase the frequency of helicopter patrols. Helicopter would be equipped with thermal camera technology « currently under evaluation » according to the company.

Enbridge's proposed change in the methods for ground patrol has important repercussions safety-wise. Ground inspections were ordered by the NEB to improve leak detection. Remote controlled pipeline leak detection systems cannot detect small or medium leaks quickly, and sometimes not at all.

According to Randy Allen, a staff consultant at UTSI International, which specializes in pipeline automation and leak detection quoted in Bloomberg[[1]](#footnote-1): “in most cases, a well-designed, computer-based system will find a major rupture in much less than 10 minutes”. But Allen also pointed out that some smaller, slower leaks are virtually impossible to detect remotely. And according to InsideClimate News' analysis of US pipeline leak data, 76% of the leaks between 2002 and July 2012 involved fewer than 30 barrels of oil (1,260 gallons).

[Enbridge also submitted to the NEB the results of its detailed engineering for Line 9 leak detection system](https://docs.neb-one.gc.ca/ll-eng/llisapi.dll/fetch/2000/130635/2856090/A73948%2D1_Letter_to_NEB_%2D_Condition_22_%2D_lDS_Computational_Monitoring_System_%2D_A4V4H4.pdf?nodeid=2856289&vernum=-2). Expected leak sensitivity performance data demonstrate that the leak detection system to be used would take two hours to detect a leak that corresponds to 2% of the nominal flow. Based on an expected volume of 300 000 barels a day, these performance data mean that the system will not detect a leak below 500 barels over a period of two hours.

Citoyens au Courant, a group of citizens and experts from Vaudreuil-Soulanges which is crossed by Enbridge 9B, are waiting to see if the National Energy Board will maintain its order to Enbridge, requiring regular visual inspections of high consequence areas from the ground, or whether the regulator will once again put the pipeline operator’s interests before public safety.

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**SOURCE:** Les Citoyens au Courant

**For information :** Lorraine Caron **|** 514-577-2644 **|** caronlor@yahoo.com

1. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-09-19/oil-pipeline-spills-go-undetected-by-much-touted-sensors [↑](#footnote-ref-1)