Letter To the Federal Government Opposing RBT2

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Date:

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Ministers Wilkinson, McKenna, Qualtrough, Murray:

I am writing to you today regarding the Review Panel Report and Recommendations on the Roberts Bank Container Terminal 2 Project (RBT2), which was published at the end of March 2020.

I have serious concerns with the proposal to build a second container terminal on Roberts Bank – the most important ecosystem on the whole West Coast of North America and one of the top Important Bird Areas (IBA) in the world. Birdlife International has already designated the Fraser Estuary as an IBA in danger, primarily due to unbridled port development and industrialization.

Your Environment Canada (ECCC) scientists have repeatedly said this project will have significant adverse environmental effects that will be immediate, continuous and cannot be mitigated. International wetlands experts, independent of the Port Authority, are equally concerned. The science is clear.

Not only that but there is significant new science that the Review Panel has not seen. This new scientific report, “Peak abundance of fatty acids from Intertidal biofilm in relation to the breeding migration of shorebirds” by Schnurr et al., was recently published in the journal “Frontiers in Marine Science”.  The peer-reviewed findings validate the biofilm/shorebird concerns presented by ECCC and others to the Panel. The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority repeatedly tried to undermine the ECCC science during the Panel hearings and as well in their closing remarks to the Panel.

So what we now have is the affirmation from recognized experts in their field, independent of the Port Authority, which demonstrates that your ECCC scientists were right all along. RBT2 if built is likely to result in the significant degradation of one of the most important ecosystems, in terms of birds and biodiversity, in the whole of North America. We simply cannot allow that to happen.

Canada cannot afford to:

* Ignore the science, which demonstrates that building RBT2 will change water temperature, water flows and salinity, negatively impacting the marine diatoms which are the cornerstone of the unique biofilm found on Roberts Bank and relied on by numerous wildlife species.
* Risk breaking the chain of the Pacific Flyway, which your scientists predict will happen with further industrialization on Roberts Bank.
* Contribute to the further decline and potential decimation of the Western Sandpiper species.
* Decimate an area that is a critical food source for millions of shorebirds.
* Place further stress on juvenile salmon that rely on the area for refuge and feeding as they transition from river to ocean.
* Destroy areas where crabs, herring and other fishes are in abundance.
* Negatively impact the already endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.

As I am sure you are aware there is no business case for RBT2. There is sufficient container terminal capacity in operation or planned to meet Canada’s trading needs for decades to come (without ever building RBT2), if it were to go ahead it would be, - by the Port Authority’s own estimates at $3.5 to $4.0 billion - the most expensive container terminal anywhere in the world.

Your responsibility and that of your cabinet colleagues is very clear. Say no to RBT2.

Sincerely,