

Feminist Intersectional Policy Analysis: Resource Development and Extraction – Maritime Link



What Is the Maritime Link?

The Maritime Link involves building and upgrading transmission infrastructure in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia and installing subsea cables in the Cabot Strait. It is part of a [larger hydroelectric development project](#), which also involves damming the Grand (Churchill) River in Labrador at Muskrat Falls and transmitting power to the island of Newfoundland. The NS and NL provincial governments have approved the project.

Why Is A Feminist Intersectional Policy Analysis Important for the Maritime Link?

A feminist intersectional policy analysis makes visible the costs and benefits of the Maritime Link. The project will have substantial social, economic and environmental impacts for Nova Scotia and Labrador, with communities in Labrador bearing a disproportionate amount of the costs. A feminist intersectional policy analysis shows the *different impacts* on women and other marginalized members of communities living at the intersection of multiple inequalities. It allows us to see how relationships of power have and have not been taken into account in the project approval process.

A Feminist Intersectional Policy Analysis of the Maritime Link

FemNorthNet undertook a feminist intersectional policy analysis of the Maritime Link in 2013-2014, using the framework developed in the fact sheet “Feminist Intersectional Policy Analysis: Resource Development and Extraction Framework.” We asked deliberate questions about how relationships of power have affected the Maritime Link approval processes, particularly the environmental assessment (EA) and Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) hearings.

Information Used

We reviewed publicly available documents including: Emera Newfoundland and Labrador’s (Emera) Maritime Link EA Report, submissions to NSUARB’s Maritime Link hearings, transcripts of the NSUARB hearings, NSUARB decisions, as well as statements published by relevant stakeholders.

Method Used

We reviewed the table of contents of both the Emera report and NSUARB transcript to identify relevant sections. We did a word search to find words that indicate a consideration of power. Internet searches provided information, such as community and organization statements, that were referenced but not reproduced in the documents.

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Questions Asked

General Questions

What are the costs and benefits of the project?

- Electricity rates will increase for Nova Scotians, which may create financial hardship for people living on low-incomes, including people with disabilities, single parents, students, and unemployed folks.
- In general, Nova Scotians bear few of the costs of the project as construction is limited to a single transmission station at Point Aconi in Cape Breton. They will benefit from the environmental, social and economic costs borne by Labradorians. This was not acknowledged in the EA or NSUARB decision.

How are women and other marginalized groups recognized and included in the project?

- The EA included plans to create a Gender Equity and Diversity Plan to promote the employment of women and other marginalized groups. The report did not give any specifics about what the plan would involve, why a specific plan to increase women's and other marginalized people's employment was needed or how gender intersects with any other identity categories.
- Within the identity category of 'Aboriginal' Emera distinguished between the Qalipu (Newfoundland) and Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and between Aboriginal people as potential future employees of Emera, Aboriginal people as traditional and commercial fishers, Aboriginal people engaging in traditional hunting and gathering activities, and Aboriginal people as members of affected communities. The EA failed to recognize that Mi'kmaq people might experience different effects than non-Aboriginal people, as has been the case in many other resource development and extraction projects in Canada.
- The Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs and Qalipu First Nation Band are in the process of negotiating Impact Benefits Agreements with Emera.

Is power seen as structural in the context of the resource development or extraction project?

- The EA and NSUARB hearings were limited in scope to consider only the Maritime Link portion of the wider project. This meant that decision-makers did not have to review the interconnectivity and links between Labrador, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.
- Colonization, racism, sexism, ableism and the other related systems of power that will determine which Nova Scotians will bear the costs and benefits of the project were not named and only superficially recognized by stating that a Gender Equity and Diversity Plan would be created in the EA.

Assessment Questions

What types of knowledge were included in the assessments and decision-making?

- The EA explicitly valued the knowledge of the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. Multiple sections relied on information from a Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Study (MEKS) and the Mi'kmaq Fisheries Study and

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incorporated these studies alongside quantitative data. No knowledge from the Indigenous peoples of Labrador was included in the EA process.

Who was involved in the consultation and negotiation process?

- Emera, the proponent, held a series of Open Houses in bigger population centers in Cape Breton and southwestern Newfoundland in June 2012. Information was presented in multiple formats (oral presentations, written materials, etc.) to the public. We do not know what accommodations were made to facilitate the inclusion of diverse people.
- Emera met with leaders of Aboriginal groups, landowners and special interest groups (hunting, fishing, etc.) in both Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. They also consulted with numerous government agencies.
- Emera established Community Liaison Committees and a Fisheries Advisory Committee. The composition of those committees has not been made public. Emera committed to consult with Qalipu and Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq leaders throughout the construction and operation phases of the project.

What considerations of time and space were included?

- The EA defined a study area in southwestern Newfoundland, the Cabot Strait and Cape Breton.
- It relied largely on a 50 year forward timeline – the anticipated operating timeframe of the Maritime Link – but sometimes acknowledged Aboriginal understandings of costs for future generations.

Have the project assessments considered impacts or costs across multiple levels?

- The EA considered impacts on the island of Newfoundland, the Cabot Strait and part of Cape Breton.
- Emera discussed costs and benefits in terms of individuals, communities and cultural groups within these regions.
- The environment was seen as a source of both food and income and as having cultural value in the EA.
- While effects on multiple levels were considered, the EA did not make connections between levels or consider differences within communities or cultural groups.

Decision-Making Questions

What do we know about the decision-making process?

- The NSUARB invited submissions, presentations and written comments from civil society groups and the public on January 29, 2013 for its May 21, 2013 deadline. Given the complexity of learning about and engaging with this formal process, only those who have extensive time and research resources are able to prepare submissions and statements.
- Groups wishing to have intervener status, and the ability to cross-examine witnesses, had to notify the NSUARB and file evidence supporting their position on the Maritime Link by April 17, 2013. Most of the groups granted intervener status were publicly in support of the project.
- FemNorthNet was the only presenter at the NSUARB hearings that used a gendered and intersectional lens, discussing costs and benefits for women as potential employees, women who live in poverty,

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women who are Aboriginal, women as consumers of electricity, women who might be vulnerable to homelessness, women as users of the health care system, and multiple other categories.

- The final NSUARB decision did not mention the gendered impacts raised by FemNorthNet.
- The NSUARB limited their consideration to Nova Scotia, despite the effects of the wider project on the people, communities, and environment of Labrador.
- Transcripts of the NSUARB hearings, copies of all submitted evidence and copies of the final decisions are available to the public on the NSUARB website.

What was the final approval process?

- The NSUARB officially approved the Maritime Link project in November 2013. This was a supplemental decision to the conditional approval granted in July 2013. In March 2014, the federal government finalized the loan guarantee. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2014.

Monitoring Questions

What do we know about the monitoring process?

- Emera is responsible for monitoring the long-term costs and mitigation measures for the Maritime Link, which were identified in the EA and approved by the Environment Assessment Committee.
- Emera has committed to ongoing consultation with the Community Liaison Committees, Fisheries Advisory Committee and Nova Scotia and Qalipu Mi'kmaq.
- Continuing to ask critical questions to Emera and the provincial government about costs and benefits in Nova Scotia and Labrador are effective actions that Nova Scotians can take.

Reflection Questions

Was social justice a consideration in the policy or decision-making process?

- While there are many gaps in the process that prevent the achievement of social justice, a promising sign for future policy processes comes from the meaningful inclusion of Mi'kmaq knowledge and values in the EA. There were consultations with Qalipu and Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq community members and organizations as well as the completion of a Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Study.
- In limiting the review to only the Maritime Link portion of the wider hydroelectric project, the NSUARB process did not challenge any dominant systems of power or change institutional practice.

Join the Conversation!

[Building Links Among Women](#) is an alliance to share knowledge and experiences and take action related to the impact of resource development on women, their families and their communities. Follow us on Facebook ([Feminist Northern Network](#)) and Twitter ([@FemNorthNetwork](#)) and share your experiences of resource development and concerns using the hashtag #BuildingLinks.