

the Packet

Refined Presence

NLRC keeping public informed

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Keeping the public informed has become a major priority for the Newfoundland and Labrador Refining Corporation (NLRC) in their proposal to build a new oil refinery in Placentia Bay.

It's so important, the company opened a public information centre near Arnold's Cove in March.



"Right from the very beginning we wanted to keep in touch with the communities in the area and have a local base," says Roland Butler, NLRC's vice president of community and environmental affairs.

He says the idea was raised during an open house session when a local resident asked when the company was going to open an office in the area.

"It was just a matter of finding the right place," says Butler.

That place was the Bull Arm visitor information centre located on the Trans Canada Highway.

"We like this location," says Butler. "It's on the highway, it's a central location for all the communities . . . so we are able to get the word out. As long as we have an active project we will always have an information centre.

"We also realized from the open houses that everyone who wanted information could not make it on those particular nights."

Butler says people can now drop in on their own time to get the latest updates on the project, talk to someone and ask questions.

"Most of the work we are doing is environmental assessment. From week to week there will be different activities (related to that). We will have regular updates available here."

The information centre is staffed by Beverley Lockyer and work term student Muriel Smith.

Along with providing information at the site they also distribute updates to the eight surrounding communities.

"We have been providing these regular updates to let people know what is happening," he says.

Employment

Along with keeping the surrounding communities up to date the information centre has also become a centre for employment inquiries.

Butler says they have received over 100 resumes. And that is without any calls for submissions.

Lockyer says they have had people from all over the province dropping into the centre asking questions about the project and the possibility for employment.

"We are getting people in here who are currently working in the oil patch in Alberta, stopping in when they are home. There is the thought they might get a job back here," adds Smith.

Butler says awareness of the project is growing, not just in this province but in other areas of the country.

He says his father and brother are working on an oil project in Alberta and are regularly asked about the Placentia Bay project.

"There is an awareness in the Alberta worksites — among people from Newfoundland and Labrador.

"The word is slowly getting out, we are getting a feel for what kind of people are interested, what their personal situation is — whether it is people working away trying to come home or people that are here wondering about job opportunities. It gives us real information."

NLRC is hopeful they can attract the skill set needed for this type and size of project.

"There are a number of experienced people we would need for a project like this."

So far the resumes the company has received cover a wide spectrum from young trades people to more experienced workers looking to work on one last project before heading into retirement.

"It is giving us a sense of where the trends are, even with the small numbers.

"We haven't been recruiting directly. We have people who are interested and want to submit a resume and we take it, record it and categorize it. We have gotten a good response so far."

Butler is hopeful this project, if it gets the green light in the environmental assessment process, will attract similar numbers as Aur Resources when that company recruited for the Duck Pond mine site.

"They had 220 positions and they had about 5,000 resumes come in," he says.

"We are hoping labour issues are something we are going to be able to address but you won't know for sure until you go out and start recruiting."

Anyone who would like more information on the NLRC refinery project can contact the public information centre at 709-463-3333 or visit them at the Bull Arm Visitor Information Centre located on the TCH.