

Marchers demand Boat Harbour deadline be honoured

BRENDAN AHERN THE NEWS

PICTOU LANDING, N.S. — The community of Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) and supporters from around the province gathered on Friday to remind the province of its commitment to close Boat Harbour. “It’s important that we remind government and premier Stephen McNeil that the Boat Harbour Act is a promise,” said Michelle Francis Denny.

Denny was speaking to a crowd of nearly 300 people, many carrying signs demanding the government honour the deadline of the 2015 Boat Harbour Act. The act puts Jan. 31, 2020 as the deadline after which the Northern Pulp mill will no longer use Boat Harbour as an effluent treatment facility.

“The Boat Harbour Act is a promise, much like a treaty, and it cannot be broken and it will not be broken,” said Denny.

But, as the date draws near, messaging from the province has led people to question if it will hold to that deadline.

“I am very concerned,” said PLFN Chief Andrea

Paul, speaking with The News minutes before leading the crowd from the community band office to a point where treated effluent is discharged out of Boat Harbour into the Northumberland Strait.

Paul mentioned a recent op/ ed written by McNeil and published in the Chronicle Herald, in which the premier pledged to honour the promise, but did not specifically mention Jan. 31 as the date that it will be closing.

“When I read that article he didn’t mention the date. It made me wonder why,” said Paul.

“(McNeil) has always been very vocal and very clear, ‘I gave them five years,’ so I’m not sure what angle he’s coming from.”

Paul said she reached out to McNeil’s office for clarification, but had not yet received a reply. In Halifax, McNeil told reporters that any change to the Jan. 31 deadline would have to be put forward in the legislature, and that so far, ‘nothing has changed.’

- With files from Andrew Rankin