

Burnaby mayor rails against coal transfer facility

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Mayor Derek Corrigan has slammed Port Metro Vancouver's approval of a \$15-million coal transfer facility by Surrey Fraser Docks after cities like Portland and Oakland turned down the project.

During city council's last meeting, Corrigan led the criticism, condemning the port's decision and blasting the standards of Montreal-based engineering and construction company SNC-Lavalin, which reviewed FSD's proposal.

"The last time we discussed this, I got some notoriety for suggesting we acted as if we were a banana republic," he said, "but when I look at the report from SNC-Lavalin, who said in their report that there was no unacceptable risks for the project, (I have to ask) unacceptable to who? SNC-Lavalin?"

"I doubt that there is much that is unacceptable to SNC-Lavalin, given their history."

The creation of the coal transfer facility is expected to dramatically increase the number of coal trains through New Westminster, Surrey and Delta as American coal is brought into B.C. and shipped overseas to China.

Coun. Nick Volkow stressed concerns about public safety, citing the disastrous Lac-Mégantic train derailment that killed 47 people last year.

"One of the main problems that led to the disaster in Lac-Mégantic was the fact that the federal government deregulated the railway industry and basically allowed them to operate their own shop with absolutely no oversight from anybody," he said.

"I would urge people that may have some concerns ... (to) start paying attention to what they're proposing and take a good look at the report that was issued last week in regards to the Lac-Mégantic disaster."

Corrigan said the reason the coal transfer facility passed in Canada is because citizens "won't stand as firmly as people will stand in the United States."

"As we give up more and more of our democratic right to make choices about our future, as we allow these governments to take away the opportunity for elected people to make these decisions, what we end up with are decisions that are made by corporate bureaucrats on behalf of multinational companies," he said. "This continues to be the pattern of behaviour that somehow is accepted here in Canada but is rejected in countries that value democracy clearly more than we do here in our country."

"I think it really is a shame."