

Presentation of the Mayor of the city of Everett at the Rabaska Public Hearings

My name is John F. Hanlon and I am the mayor of Everett, Massachusetts, in the United States. As someone with 41 years of experience in municipal politics, I was on the frontlines when the first LNG terminal in the U.S. was proposed and built. The LNG facility was granted a permit by the Everett Board of Aldermen in 1967, with construction completed in 1972 and operational since that time.

Everett is a city that has a very dense estimated population of 52,000 contained within barely three square miles. One of these miles contains the industrial section of the city; therefore our population density is 25,000 persons per square mile. The city limits on the southern side are marked by the Mystic River, which is approximately 500 m wide. Across the channel, just opposite, is Boston and, less than three miles to the east, Logan International Airport, one of North America's busiest airports.

Over the past six months, it has been our pleasure to welcome to City Hall elected officials from the City of Lévis, in particular Mayor Roy Marinelli and some of her colleagues from her executive committee. A little later, last fall, we were visited by members of "Mouvement populaire A Bon Port" and the group's president, Isabelle Tremblay. Each group asked us a great number of very relevant questions. However, I was greatly impressed by the fact that their interest not only covered the project start-up but for the future of the community. Ms. Tremblay invited the City of Everett, represented by myself, and its Fire Department, managed by Chief David T. Butler, to share our experiences and impressions of our LNG terminal with the commission in charge of the public hearings here today.

Nearly 40 years ago, the arrival of an LNG terminal in Everett led to a certain amount of debate within our community, as I understand has also been the case here. The unfamiliarity with an industry we had never had in our city before, as well as its technology and processes quite naturally raised a number of questions. The very same questions that you and I might well ask if we, too, were confronted by physical and very visible changes to our environment. I believe this type of questioning to be healthy for all the citizens of your community. In the City of Everett, the first questions were about safety and related matters; the impact the terminal would have on our lives, as well as the daily lives of those around us; the thinking behind such a project from an energy, economic, and social point of view; and as is more frequently the case today, the effect it would have on our immediate environment and the broader general environment. All these questions concerning the LNG project in Everett had to be asked and answered to everyone's satisfaction. That was my deepest conviction 40 years ago, and my thinking remains exactly the same today. Responsible promoters must vouch for their intentions and the impact their facilities will have on the communities they serve.

However, things got to be a little counterproductive, and even surreal, when some people began playing the city officials or calling on people who endorsed far-fetched scenarios or certain hypotheses situated at the furthest extremes of the scientific spectrum. I am not a highly trained engineer as you are, Mr. Samak, but I know how to weigh an argument's pros and cons. By way of example, 40 years ago, those who wanted to scaremonger about dangers surrounding the LNG terminal called upon a local professor, Mr. James Fay, whose hypotheses were, according to the rest of the scientific community at the time, highly improbable if not to say exaggerated given the rate at which science was progressing. His comments and theories caused quite a stir in the community, but his apocalyptic vision of things to come that was so crystal clear in his eyes and those of his followers never materialized mostly due to my exposure that his hypotheses was based on propane and not LNG. Based on my studies and experiences, I am the most knowledgeable lay-person in the City of Everett on the LNG facility based on the shores of the Mystic River.

Fortunately, our regulatory authorities then stepped up to the plate. My fellow citizens who still harbored—in good faith, it must be said—a number of questions and concerns found the answers they were looking for. Others who refused to acknowledge the facts and the most objective of views of reality and continued with their unproven theories were unsuccessful in getting the federal commission to derogate from its intellectual and scientific role as national advisor. The terminal was therefore built, and it generated all the usual economic spinoffs associated with such major ventures.

In the space of several months, the terminal moved discreetly into operation and quickly became a very real part of our local community. Today, daily life in Everett, Boston, Revere, Chelsea, and Winthrop continues to live peacefully next door to the LNG terminal. Distrigas, a corporate citizen of the highest order, is actively involved in community life, supporting local young people and organizations. I can see the facilities as clearly from my office and home as I can see you here today, and whenever I have the time I never miss the chance to see an LNG tanker come in to our port. I know that every time one of these ships arrives, Boston is being kept warm and tens of thousands of people will be heading off to work the next day. I should also point out that Distrigas is the supplier of energy that runs the Boston Electrical Generating Plant that provides electricity to Boston and is part of the national grid.

John F. Hanlon
Mayor of the City of Everett