

ECONEWS



Issue 228

Promoting the Vision of a Vibrant Sustainable Vancouver Island

OCTOBER 2012

ABOUT THAT PIPELINE...

Are you upset by Enbridge's plans to build a pipeline from Alberta's tar sands, crossing BC's mountains, forests, rivers and ocean waters, to ship the oil to China?

Enbridge says "no problem" when it comes to the risk of a pipeline rupture, but there were 804 spills on Enbridge pipelines between 1999 and 2010.

Enbridge won't even own the pipeline. That has been handed to a limited partnership called the Northern Gateway Pipelines Limited Partnership, seemingly with the goal of limiting liability in the event of a spill. The Enbridge spill at Kalamazoo, Michigan, cost \$765 million to clean up.

Once the diluted bitumen arrives at Kitimat it will be shipped through waters that are exposed to extremely challenging winter weather conditions with low visibility and high winds. As many as five tankers a week will cross these waters, including possible supertankers, 300 metres long.

This is not gasoline that floats on the surface and then evaporates. This is diluted bitumen, which will sink to the bottom and remain there leaching into the seabed, unless there are submarines to go down and gather it up.

Once Enbridge has delivered the oil to whoever owns the tanker (think Panama or Liberia) it will not be responsible for any oil-spill clean up. The ship's owner's liability is capped at \$140 million, and while Canada belongs to an international fund that can cover costs up to \$1.33 billion, it cost \$3.5 billion to clean up after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Estimates for BP's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico run as high as \$100 billion, and Exxon played every dirty trick in the book to delay and avoid paying.

Because of all this, the Coastal First Nations have banned crude oil supertankers from the north coast, and other First Nations have signed a declaration banning the pipeline from their territories in the Fraser River watershed, banning oil tankers from the ocean migration routes of the Fraser River salmon.

Maybe it's the whole concept of the Alberta tar sands that bothers you, the notion of ripping up the boreal forest, evicting or killing the creatures that live there, in order to keep our oil-addicted lifestyle going for a few more years.

How much longer can we keep it up? How much more of Nature are we willing to sacrifice just so that we, homo shortsighticus, can continue overconsuming, far beyond the biocapacity of the planet to support us?



When we - or the Chinese - burn the oil, where do we think the carbon goes? Into the atmosphere. There's a reason why the Arctic ice is melting so fast. All that carbon from ancient marine organisms traps heat, and as the heat increases the ice melts. The polar jet stream is disrupted, and global weather patterns go crazy. If you think you understand climate change, but you have not yet experienced a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, you don't understand climate change.

The oil is going to run out soon anyway. We can continue drilling into the last oilfields under the Boreal forest, under the Arctic, under the Gulf of Mexico, all the time pouring carbon into the atmosphere, but for what?

A clean, green sustainable future without oil is not only possible – it is both essential and desirable. Repeat twenty times.

We are good at innovating. We are good at change. Only a hundred and

fifty years ago most transport was by foot or by horse and buggy, and look at us today, zipping around in cars and planes and Skyping our way through global meetings.

Progress towards a green economy is happening, but think how much faster it could happen it there was a proper price on carbon, if the fossil fuel subsidies were removed, and if there were specific policies in place designed to move us to oil-free transport and a low-carbon world.

The pipeline represents everything that is wrong with our world, from the disrespect for Nature to the belief that we can keep on burning ancient carbon without harm to the planet, from the mandatory selfishness that often underlies corporate activity to the corruption of democracy by big oil.

Enbridge believes it can sweet-talk us into ignoring all this by emphasizing how much money BC can earn and how many jobs will be created, without so much as a nod to the real concerns.

What motivates the many who are opposing the pipeline – and the Kinder Morgan pipeline to Vancouver – is far deeper than can be bought off with a few more jobs or dollars or a refinery in Kitimat. It is our whole future on Earth that people are concerned about, and the future of our children.

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On Monday October 22nd a major sit-in is being organized in Victoria to oppose the pipelines, the tankers and the threats they pose to the west coast, supported by leaders from the business, First Nations, environmental, labour, medical and academic, artistic communities. If you plan participating in the anticipated civil disobedience there's a mandatory training session on Sunday October 21st. See www.defendourcoast.ca.

Thanks to the Vancouver Observer, Living Oceans, Adrian Raeside, West Coast Environmental Law, Robyn Allan and the Polaris Institute.

-Guy Dauncey