

Mr. Ross Hornby, Canadian Ambassador to the European Union
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment
The Honourable Christian Paradis, Minister of Natural Resources
The Honourable Peter Van Loan, Minister of Trade
The Honourable Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Liberal Party
The Honourable Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party
The Honourable Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party

Friday April 8, 2011

Dear Mr. Hornby, Prime Minister Harper, Ministers Kent, Minister Paradis, Minister Van Loan and leaders of the Liberal, NDP, Bloc Québécois and Green Party,

The undersigned Canadian civil society organizations are writing to request an end to all lobbying of the European Parliament on the behalf of the Canadian government to weaken the European Fuel Quality Directive.

Canada was the only non-EU Member State that participated in the Fuel Quality Directive (FQD) consultation. Briefing notes and letters attained with freedom of information laws, and reported in the media further expose a series of efforts aimed at ensuring the Canadian tar sands are not assigned as a high carbon crude.

This includes two letters sent by the Canadian Ambassador in Brussels, Ross Hornby, to the head the European Commission's Environment Department and a letter from a senior official at Natural Resources Canada. The issue has also been raised at a meeting between EU President Jose Manuel Barroso and Prime Minister Harper.

Attributing tar sands as high carbon crude has been accused of potentially being a barrier to trade, suggesting potential action under trade law. The issue has been raised in the Canada and Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) negotiations.¹ One media report suggests that Canada had threatened to scrap the CETA negotiations over the tar sands and fuel quality directive.

These efforts suggest that attributing tar sands as high carbon crude is not based on science. Yet a recent credible scientific study prepared for the European Commission's Environment Department confirm that the lifecycle emissions from the tar sands are twenty three per cent higher than the average fuel currently used in Europe.² This study adds to a significant body of scientific research confirming that the tar sands have a heavier carbon footprint, amongst other serious environmental concerns, compared to conventional oil.

This pattern of lobbying the EU to weaken climate policy is unacceptable. Further, trade agreements and rules should not be allowed to override social and environmental priorities.

We are collectively faced with a climate crisis that requires urgent action. Policies that discourage the use of high carbon fuels play an important role in reducing emissions alongside other measures such as increasing the efficient use of energy, renewable energy expansion and public transportation. The Canadian government has fallen far behind the EU and many other countries in this regard.

Rather than lobby to weaken the efforts of other countries, the Canadian government should focus on efforts that reduce emissions, support green jobs expansion and better regulate the serious social and environmental consequences of tar sands development.

Sincerely,

Alberta Wilderness Association
Alternatives
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario
Canadian Youth Climate Coalition
Climate Action Network Canada
Common Frontiers
Corporate Ethics International
Council of Canadians
CUPE National
Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental
Society
Environmental Defence

Équiterre
Greenpeace Canada
Indigenous Environmental Network
Living Oceans Society
National Union of Public and General Employees
Ontario Council of Hospital Unions
Polaris Institute
Public Interest Alberta
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
Vegans & Vegetarians of Alberta Association
Watershed Bioregional Society
Wilderness Committee
Yukon Federation of Labour

¹ The European Commission's sustainability impact assessment of CETA notes that where the CETA contributes to greater extraction and investment in the tar sands, it is likely that Canada's emissions of greenhouse gases will increase. Colin Kirkpatrick et al., "A Trade SIA Relating to the Negotiation of a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) Between the EU and Canada" Draft Final Report: Summary Report March 2011, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2011/march/tradoc_147754.pdf>

² Adam R. Brandt, "Upstream Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions from Canadian oil sands as a Feedstock for European Refineries," Department of Energy Resources Engineering Stanford University, January 18, 2011, <https://circabc.europa.eu/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/db806977-6418-44db-a464-20267139b34d/Brandt_Oil_Sands_GHG_Final.pdf>