

# Together, We Stopped Energy East



by Andrea Harden-Donahue

**My day started like any other, cooking breakfast with my kids. My phone pinged and there it was – a breaking news story that TransCanada had pulled the plug on the \$15.7 billion Energy East pipeline!**

I'll always remember that moment, which was followed by a celebratory dance with my kids in the kitchen before I rushed into the office.

Energy East's demise has been written on the wall for a while.

The failings of the National Energy Board (NEB), the newly required climate test, clear threats to drinking water and Indigenous rights and strong community opposition all played a role in making TransCanada back down – but you would never know that from the media coverage.

Some people are trying to suggest TransCanada's decision to dump Energy East was due to politics – that the federal government failed to help a nation-building project. Others are blaming Quebec, or say it was a simple market decision.

## **Energy East, an export pipeline**

Energy East was promoted by the federal government as a “nation-building” project. This rhetoric was a myth meant to create social licence for the project. In the report, *Energy East: An export pipeline not for domestic gain*, we, along with other groups, confirmed that close to 90 per cent of Energy East's 1.1 million barrels per day of crude was destined for overseas.



If we wanted to have a real conversation about energy security in our country, we would be talking about redirecting Newfoundland oil exports to Atlantic Canada and ending the restrictive energy provisions of NAFTA, not building a massive tar sands pipeline Canada doesn't need.

Media coverage also saw pundits rehashing old clichés that blame Quebec for stopping Energy East. Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall went so far as to question the federal system of equalization payments.

## **TransCanada didn't win over Quebec**

TransCanada proposed an export port in protected beluga-inhabited waters. The pipeline crossed key water sources that supply the drinking water of more than 3 million residents. Diluted bitumen, which is known to sink in water, would have had devastating consequences if spilled.

In a pivotal misstep, TransCanada hired Jean Charest, a former Quebec premier, as a project lobbyist. *The National Observer* exposed information about a private meeting between the NEB and TransCanada, which was later found to be a conflict of interest, effectively grinding the pipeline's federal review to a halt.

## **How we helped stop Energy East**

With your generous support, Energy East faced a wall of opposition that grew stronger every day.

In 2013, when the project was first announced, we immediately got to work. The Council of Canadians organized 16 public forums, meeting face-to-face with landowners, Indigenous communities,

local groups and politicians along the pipeline path. This helped to connect people to each other and build local opposition.

We released eight hard-hitting reports that exposed Energy East's risks to our climate and water and TransCanada's terrible spill track record.

We helped drive more than 100,000 people to send messages to the NEB urging the board to include climate change impacts in its review of the pipeline. The day after the NEB announced it would include a climate test, TransCanada signaled it was reconsidering the project.

## **Other tar sands pipelines**

You may have heard about Kinder Morgan's proposed Trans Mountain pipeline in B.C. Like Energy East, the Kinder Morgan project is also proving to be a long and expensive fight against a billion dollar U.S. oil giant. There is also Enbridge's Line 3 in Manitoba and Line 10 in Ontario – both of these tar sands pipelines face opposition.

All of these fights are about protecting water from harmful projects. They are about always respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples. And they are about changing our continued commitment to climate-damaging fossil fuel projects and moving to a sustainable energy future for us all.

Stopping Energy East proves once again that together, we can do this.

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