



by Andrea Harden-Donahue

The Council of Canadians deployed a 10-foot inflatable elephant outside of Victoria Hall in Ottawa in late January as federal, provincial and territorial Environment Ministers met to discuss a national climate plan.

Rising Tide of **Community Opposition** to the **Energy East Pipeline**

When TransCanada first proposed the massive 1.1-million-barrel-per-day Energy East pipeline from Alberta to New Brunswick in August 2013, it was pitched as the “no-brainer” with broad political support. What a difference two years makes.

The Council of Canadians was first to warn about the serious risks this new massive export oil pipeline poses to our waterways, climate and communities. Since then, TransCanada has faced a series of major hurdles to their proposal.

Cacouna, Quebec export port cancelled

Quebec communities and social movements mounted an impressive campaign to stop the controversial export port, which was to be located beside an endangered Beluga whale habitat in the Saint Lawrence River. TransCanada officials cancelled the port in April 2015, forcing a two-year delay to the project. This also added to TransCanada’s ballooning costs, which have increased by one-third, to \$15.7 billion, prompting questions about the economic viability of the project.

Rising tide of community opposition

From packed Ontario Energy Board consultations, to Quebec mayors and municipalities representing 6 million residents voicing opposition, to a 700-person strong march to the “end of the (pipe)line” path in Red Head, New Brunswick, Energy East is facing a growing wall of opposition. According to a poll commissioned by Climate Action Network, 61 per cent of Canadians agree that protecting the climate is more important than building the Energy East pipeline and expanding the tar sands.

Indigenous concerns

Ontario’s Regional Chief Stan Beardy has expressed grave concerns about the National Energy Board (NEB) process. In a recent open letter, the Assemblies of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Manitoba Chiefs said the NEB review is devoid of legitimacy, calling for its cancellation until a new process is agreed on. Other communities, like those within Treaty 3, the Grand Wo-lastoq Council, Kanasatake and Kahn-awake, have openly declared their concerns and opposition.

New provincial and federal hurdles

Quebec will conduct a provincial review of the project. Ontario’s review found that Energy East presents more risks than benefits. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has stated that governments grant permits for projects like Energy East but communities grant permission. More recently, the Trudeau government announced Energy East will fall under interim review measures while the government makes changes to the NEB and the environmental assessment process. This will add more public consultations and a climate test for the pipeline. It also means an extra nine months is tacked onto the timeline before a final federal decision is made.

The Council of Canadians has worked with and supported groups opposing the pipeline. We have released reports and briefs (available online at www.canadians.org/energyeast), participated in municipal and provincial review processes, and held town halls and lobby meetings to connect with affected communities and decision makers.

Council chapters and supporters are also taking action by sending letters and emails to put political pressure on elected officials.

While we have made clear progress, there are still significant challenges to overcome before we can stop this project.

Trudeau government in murky middle ground on pipelines

In January, the federal government announced a new review process that includes evaluating climate impacts. It's not clear whether this climate test will do what it needs to do – reject the Energy East pipeline and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipelines. However, some federal ministers – and Trudeau himself – continue to say they want to get Alberta oil to “tidewater,” alluding to a desire for one or both of these controversial projects to proceed.

Filling the Energy East pipeline could result in an increase of up to 40 per cent in tar sands production and generate up to 32 million tonnes of carbon pollution. Along with Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion, it could unleash 45.4 million tonnes of greenhouse gases annually. This is more than the annual climate pollution of eight provinces and territories.

A scientific report in *Nature* reveals that Energy East alone (which has a 40-year lifespan) threatens to exceed Canada's two-degree carbon budget in about 19 years. A 1.5 degrees Celsius target, which the Canadian government supported at the UN climate talks in Paris, requires an even stricter limit to the amount of oil that can be extracted from the tar sands.

The federal announcement of new rules for evaluating pipelines puts the Energy East review under transition, or interim measures even though the current NEB review has not even officially begun. TransCanada should be told to resubmit their application under the new, improved review process. Undoubtedly, industry's lobbying power has prevented this.

Despite the patriotic rhetoric, the Energy East pipeline is primarily for export. Up to 90 per cent of its contents will be shipped overseas unrefined.

Uniting around the protection of water

Following public consultations, where a resounding 97 per cent of participants rejected the Energy East pipeline, Montreal-area mayors came out strongly against the project. Their announcement opposing the pipeline was met with harsh criticism, particularly from Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, Calgary's Mayor and the Alberta Wildrose Party. The media portrayed this as a west versus east showdown, where Montreal and Quebec stand in the way of Alberta crude getting to eastern Canadian refineries.

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Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow argues that Energy East is indeed a national unity issue, but the issue that should unite us is protecting drinking water.

Energy East's 4,400 km path crosses six provinces and threatens thousands of waterways with a major oil spill.

It would run near – and through – critical waterways, including drinking water sources for Montreal, Winnipeg, North Bay (Ontario) and Saint John (New Brunswick). It also crosses a highly vulnerable aquifer outside of Ottawa.

The multi-use oil pipeline would ship diluted bitumen produced in the tar sands. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences recently concluded the most comprehensive review of diluted bitumen to date. Diluted bitumen is more likely to sink quickly following a spill, making full cleanup far more difficult. The study concluded that neither first responders at the local, state and national levels in the U.S., nor the oil industry, were prepared to handle a major spill into water. Canada is no different.

TransCanada's own leak detection system cannot detect spills under 1.5 per cent of the pipe's capacity. A leak of 1.5 per cent would release up to 2.62 million litres of crude oil per day. In 48 hours this could cause the worst oil spill in Canadian history.

Energy East is our risk and TransCanada's reward.

Andrea Harden-Donahue is the Energy and Climate Justice Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.

The Council of Canadians continues the fight to stop Energy East

Here are some of the ways we are taking action:

- Building community opposition along the pipeline path.
- Lobbying federal MPs to improve pipeline reviews and implement a fair climate test.
- Participating in federal consultations and encouraging others to do so.
- Supporting Indigenous opposition.
- Releasing briefs and reports that expose the pipeline's risks.
- Holding town halls and meetings in Winnipeg, North Bay, Ottawa and three New Brunswick communities.
- Organizing with landowners in New Brunswick and at the “end of the line” in Red Head, New Brunswick.
- Participating in provincial reviews.

For more information about how you can be involved in stopping the Energy East pipeline visit our website at www.canadians.org/energyeast.