



by Andrea Harden-Donahue

## Resisting Big Oil's influence from coast-to-coast

**A national debate is raging over extreme energy projects on Canada's west and east coasts, raising serious questions about how far the government is willing to go to facilitate business for the oil industry.**

On the west coast, the Trudeau government recently announced its intention to buy Texas-based Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline using \$4.5 billion of public money. This is just the starting cost. Economist Robyn Allen says total costs could reach as high as \$20 billion. The pipeline plan will lead to the export of 890,000 barrels of crude every day from the Alberta tar sands through the Burrard Inlet.

On the east coast, offshore Nova Scotia, BP has begun drilling near Sable Island National Park. BP is the company behind the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the world's worst marine spill, which occurred in the Gulf of Mexico.

It took just 61 days for BP to spill in Atlantic waters, releasing 136,000 litres of synthetic drilling mud off the shore of Nova Scotia.

The reasons driving the Council of Canadians' opposition to these projects, the actions we take to resist them, and our vision of a better path forward, unite these campaigns on both sides of the country.

### **Indigenous consent**

Building and sustaining relationships with Indigenous peoples at the forefront of challenging Big Oil's push for unlimited access to fossil fuel resources is a priority for the Council of Canadians.

Indigenous communities on the front lines of the impacts of the fossil fuel industry are demonstrating leadership and prioritizing the protection of water, land and our climate. We see this in examples such as the Secwepemc Tiny House movement along the Kinder Morgan pipeline route and the building of Kwekwecnewtwx, a traditional Watch House Indigenous Coast Salish members built 100 yards south of the Kinder Morgan oil facility in Burnaby.

Indigenous legal challenges are also a distinct threat to the interests of Big Oil. The federal government has a duty under Section 35 of Canada's

Constitution to consult First Nations in a meaningful way about issues and decisions that could affect their rights. This, and other legal rights, are the crux of the case seven First Nations are arguing before the Federal Court of Appeals, challenging the National Energy Board and federal approval of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. The court case could still halt the project in its tracks.

### **Water links**

This work is intimately connected with the Council of Canadians' water campaign, where Maude Barlow's tireless efforts to put water protection at the forefront of decision making has created clear links with Indigenous water warriors.

We have worked hard to expose the heightened risks of spilled diluted bitumen in waterways. Diluted bitumen, the substance extracted from Alberta's tar sands, has proven to sink in water, making cleanup efforts far more difficult and expensive. The Council of Canadians has also shown corporations' track records of shirking their responsibilities not only to prevent disasters, but to clean up afterwards.

## When in a climate hole, stop digging

Both the Kinder Morgan project and BP's plans to drill up to seven wells offshore Nova Scotia (test drilling is now underway) will help facilitate an increase in Canadian fossil fuel production at a time when our country – and the world – need to be going in the opposite direction.

New fossil fuel projects are not consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement.

While the world cannot transition off of fossil fuels overnight, there must be recognition that the sector is big enough. We need to get serious about minimizing the environmental and social impacts of existing fossil fuel production while we plan for a just transition to sustainable energy production and consumption. This is best done through community and government leadership. It should not be left to the whims of the market and the interests of Big Oil companies.

Evidence shows that investments in public transit, energy efficiency and renewable energies can generate more jobs than equivalent investments in fossil fuels. Every day, new examples emerge of communities – and even countries – headed in this direction, making decisions that benefit both people and the environment.

## Fighting Big Oil's influence

Increasingly, people are asking why Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and

Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna, who campaigned as champions of the environment, approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline and BP drilling offshore Nova Scotia.

The immediate answer on Kinder Morgan is that Prime Minister Trudeau saw it as a trade-off for advancing the national climate plan. The logic here is akin to adopting an all-poutine diet to lose weight.

The more complicated answer lies in a long history spanning multiple governments provincially and federally, where the Big Oil lobby has had an undue influence on political direction.

Take, for example, how the Trudeau government backed down from methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) regulations after the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), Canada's foremost Big Oil lobby group, asked it to. Or the memos Greenpeace exposed finding Trudeau welcoming the election of U.S. President Donald Trump as positive news and embracing CAPP as a lobbying partner for TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline.

In the first four months after the federal election, Suncor, the country's biggest revenue-generating energy company, met with high-ranking federal officials at least 12 times.

All of these connections show the Trudeau government is building on the

former Harper government's record of listening to and propping up the oil and gas industry.

## Oil production up, royalty revenue down

According to David Hughes' recent groundbreaking *Canada's Energy Outlooks* report, while national oil production has increased 75 per cent since 2000 in Canada, royalty revenue from fossil fuels has dropped an astounding 63 per cent and corporate taxes have fallen more than 50 per cent.

Lobbying power and influence is a key reason why we've seen the Harper and Trudeau governments fail to make good on their respective promises to appropriately tax and regulate energy industries and phase out fossil fuel subsidies. Prime Minister Trudeau's plan to use public money to buy the Kinder Morgan pipeline entrenches this connection even more.

## Community-building actions

With your generous support, the Council of Canadians is organizing public speaking events and protests, making government submissions, engaging in Indigenous solidarity, providing critical reports and information, and garnering media attention on these important issues. None of this would be possible without the help of people like you. Thank you for all that you do!

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



## Can you chip in to help us fight Big Oil's influence?

Use the enclosed postage paid envelope to send back this form with your donation. Thank you!

**YES** – I want to help stop the Trudeau government from using public money to buy the Kinder Morgan pipeline and from allowing environmentally dangerous offshore drilling near Nova Scotia.

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I want to start a monthly contribution!

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