

Fracked Gas Is Coming down the Pipe

by Maryam Adrangi

Industry and government representatives were working closely together in the lead-up to the B.C. election this past spring, resulting in a surge in proposals to expand the fossil fuel industry in the province.

Oil and gas investors said B.C.'s election "was the single most important election to the energy landscape in all of North America in several years." Because of this, communities in northeastern B.C. are now inundated by energy-intensive projects, particularly fracking. And there is no slow-down in sight.

British Columbia is already home to one of the largest fracking regions in North America, which includes the Horn River, Montney, and Liard basins, and there are more than 1,000 fracking wells in the province. Take these numbers, add in the fact that the province wants to frack more, that there are 10 proposals for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants on the coast, and that the Harper government has close ties with the energy industry, and you have a recipe for unparalleled energy development. Everything is lining up to move fracked gas to the coast, condense it to liquid at an LNG plant, put it on tankers, and ship it out.

The fracking process is an incredibly energy- and water-intensive method of extracting gas. This is why fracked gas has been called "unconventional gas," much like tar sands crude is called "unconventional oil" because it is more energy- and water-intensive to extract than conventional oil. Fracking is essentially B.C.'s equivalent to the tar sands. The province is beholden to the fracking industry for financial profits and shows little regard for fracking's environmental and health impacts.

Over the past several years, there has been increasing awareness of how destructive and dangerous the tar sands are, and there has been a cor-

This facility, located in Rolla, B.C., houses contaminated wastewater from fracking operations.



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responding groundswell of opposition. While tar sands opposition began as simply fighting mining projects, more recently, people have been working to stop tar sands pipelines from being built through their communities.

Opposition to pipelines has emerged across North America. First Nations have united against the Northern Gateway pipeline by signing on to the "Save the Fraser Declaration," which states that communities will not let tar sands pipelines or tankers through their traditional territories. People in southern Ontario and in Quebec have led fights against pumping stations that are part of the Line 9 expansion and reversal project. And landowners and students in Texas have been chaining themselves to machinery, setting up "tree-sits," and occupying land in order to stop construction of the Keystone XL pipeline.

A pipeline boom in B.C.

Similar actions may happen in the fights against fracking expansion, and in particular, against the several proposed pipelines that would transport fracked gas from northeastern B.C. to coastal LNG plants for export.

The Pacific Trail pipeline would bring fracked gas through northern B.C. The pipeline, which has already been approved by the province, follows much of the same route as the Northern Gateway pipeline, which suggests that industry is looking at this path as an "energy corridor." The fact that there are other major fracking export pipeline proposals from Pembina, Spectra, and Coastal Gas Link that follow – for the most part – the same route, confirms this idea.

But communities along the route are

saying "no" to pipelines. The Unist'ot'en Clan of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation have set up log cabins, permaculture gardens and pit houses along the route of the proposed Pacific Trail pipeline. Clan members have also evicted pipeline surveyors from the territory. Every year the Wet'suwet'en host an action camp, inviting people to come and see the land where they hunt and the river from which they drink and fish. People can see that the so-called "energy corridor" will have serious impacts on the land and water the Wet'suwet'en are protecting.

People's collaborative efforts to slow work down can be an effective strategy to stop industrial expansion. With delays to surveying and land access being denied, the Pacific Trail Partnership had to develop a new pipeline route and request an extension to the terms of the project's environmental assessment because the company was unable to start construction before the original deadline.

Industry may be adamant about pushing through fracking pipelines, but communities are also adamant about protecting their land and water for future generations. During our "No Pipelines, No Tankers" speaking tour last year, Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow said: "Pipelines are the arteries and the blood lines of the tar sands."

Similarly, pipelines are the bloodlines and arteries of the gas industry. While we build community understanding about fracking we are going to see a powerful groundswell of opposition intent on stopping the pumping flow of fracked gas.

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