Letters to the Editor

Tar sands too high a price to pay

I just wanted to express my gratitude to all of those who helped to organize the tar sands action in Ottawa. I am living in B.C. at the moment and was unable to attend, but I was wishing I could have been there to be part of it!

I have sent a letter to my local MP about the issue and wanted to share a bit of what I wrote:

“Although I care deeply about many social and ecological issues, the tar sands have for many years occupied a central place in my thoughts. The tar sands cannot be part of Canada’s long-term energy strategy. As such, investments in pipelines such as the Keystone XL or the Enbridge Northern Gateway are inappropriate. As I am sure you are aware, the contribution of tar sands projects to rapid climate change is massive and unacceptable. Every time I learn about climate change-induced conflicts, displaced peoples, floods, storms and droughts, ocean acidification and species loss, I think of Canada’s tar sands. From my perspective, there are many, many victims of climate change around the world; we have a clear moral imperative to wean our economies off of oil.

“It is possible to transform our economies and live well without fossil fuels. Without clean, abundant water, however, health and prosperity are impossible. It makes no sense to sacrifice a major watershed in order to prolong our dependence on oil for a decade or two. The contaminants currently being discharged in high volumes into the Athabasca watershed are not only highly toxic, but also very long-lived.”

Janine MacLeod
PhD Candidate, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University
Vancouver, British Columbia

We need to educate about proportional representation

In the 2007 provincial election people in Ontario went through a disappointing attempt to introduce proportional representation. There appeared to be a deliberate attempt to avoid and stifle discussion. I think that the Council of Canadians is in a unique, non-partisan position to provide leadership on this issue. Proportional representation is a difficult concept to educate others about. The mechanics of it are quite variable and therein, in my estimation, lies the problem. The general public is justifiably suspicious of something new that they don’t entirely understand, especially when there is no provision to revert to the former format if the population is grossly dissatisfied.

Gordon Scott
Warsaw, Ontario

Editor’s note: The Council of Canadians has been an active proponent of proportional representation. As part of Democracy Week in September, we joined with Fair Vote Canada to raise awareness, arguing that proportional representation is more democratic than our current first-past-the-post electoral system. It ensures a fairer representation of votes cast, and prevents a governing party from holding total power after earning only a small percentage of the popular vote.

Dr. O’Connor should be commended

Thank you for the article “When the Water Changed” on Dr. John O’Connor in the summer 2011 issue of Canadian Perspectives. Dr. O’Connor did what all general practitioners should do when he spoke of the environmental effects of the Alberta tar sands and their long-term effect on the health of the people of Fort Chipewyan and the First Nations people of Lake Athabasca. Dr. O’Connor should be commended for standing up for his patients. He has advocated on their behalf despite the pressure from Alberta politicians and heavy-handed federal bureaucrats.

Sterling Haynes, MSc, MD (retired)
Kelowna, British Columbia

Send us your letters!

If you have something to say about an article you have read in Canadian Perspectives, or an issue you think would interest our readers, please write to us. We reserve the right to edit your letter for clarity and length. Letters must include your full name, address and phone number.

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Canadian Perspectives
The Council of Canadians
170 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 700
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V5
Email: inquiries@canadians.org, Attention: Editor, Canadian Perspectives

We took the voices of 23,000 of our members with us to Parliament Hill in September as part of a mass demonstration calling on the Harper government to say “No!” to the environmentally destructive tar sands.