



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
BRITISH COLUMBIA DIVISION

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July 29, 2010

Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
Box 9041, Station PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Re. Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline

Dear Premier Campbell,

The governments of Canada and British Columbia are on a potential collision course with First Nations and those concerned about the environment over Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline proposal. Enbridge, one of whose pipelines just a few days ago leaked more than three million litres of oil into the Kalamazoo River in Southern Michigan, intends to ship dirty oil from the tar sands to tankers that will ply the fragile northern coast of B.C.

I am writing on behalf the 80,000 CUPE members we represent in B.C. to oppose this plan.

The Enbridge pipeline is proposed to stretch from the north of Edmonton to Kitimat. Some 525,000 barrels of crude oil will be delivered each day to oil tankers that will navigate the Douglas Channel before entering the Hecate Strait, just east of Haida Gwai'i. This part of the coast lies at the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest, home to some of the largest and oldest trees known to humankind. As you know, the forest is also the habitat of the rare Kermode bear.

Given your own words about the need to tackle climate change, we cannot help but see the "northern energy corridor" announced in the 2009 Throne Speech as contrary to this goal. This "corridor" seems to be intended to facilitate the development of the Enbridge Gateway pipeline as well as enable the super tankers to ply our fragile coastal ecosystems in order to take bitumen to refineries in California or Asia. If the pipeline goes ahead, it will be an incentive for increased tar sands production, thereby increasing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. This will be contrary to your Government's stated goals with regard to climate change.

If the plan goes ahead, the Gateway pipeline will be one of the largest petroleum pipeline projects ever undertaken in North America. In B.C. alone, the underground pipeline will be engineered to cross at least 1,000 streams, rivers and lakes, including portions of the Great Bear Rainforest. As Jim Culp, a long-time fishing guide in the Terrace area has said: "The Clore river valley is near impossible to put a pipeline

Barry O'Neill, President
Mark Hancock, Secretary-Treasurer

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through. It's just a series of cataracts...and is prone to violent floods and 20-foot winter snowfalls. If there's a major pipeline break in the upper [Clore] watershed, the oil is down the Copper River and into the Skeena, and nobody can dispute that it would be out of control by that point. It couldn't be cleaned up in the short term." (TheTyee.ca, August 23, 2006.)

In February 2006, the British Columbia government pledged to protect this invaluable rainforest, one of the largest tracts of rainforest land in the world, by signing an agreement with environmental groups, First Nations groups, loggers and hunters. CUPE BC is calling on you to honour this pledge and to concretely support a subsequent pledge by the federal government, in January 2007, to protect this land.


While jobs are needed in this province, the risks to the environment and to the First Nations way of life presented by this proposal far outweigh the benefits. The Exxon Valdez spill 21 years ago left a lasting and devastating legacy in its wake. The recent BP oil disaster has proven to be much, much worse. And this week's disaster in Michigan has threatened one of America's great rivers. We need only a glimpse of these disasters to see the harmful effects of such oil spills. Shipping accidents, as well, occur often enough to remind us of the risks associated with oil tanker traffic off the B.C. coastline. An oil spill on this coastline would be devastating to the ecological system of B.C. and much of the world.

CUPE BC also notes that the proposed overland pipeline route is fraught with political risk. The pipeline must cross the traditional territories of more than 40 First Nations, most of whom have expressed very strong opposition to the pipeline. Many of the affected First Nations have won important court cases around questions of rights, title and meaningful consultation. This raises the question of whether the Enbridge business plan is viable.

We join with First Nations groups and environmental organizations in insisting that oil tankers be prevented from navigating off the coast of B.C., particularly the area in which the Great Bear Rainforest lies. We urge the provincial government to oppose the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Project and honour the Great Bear Rainforest agreement it signed.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Barry O'Neill
President
CUPE BC Division

cc. Honourable Barry Penner, Minister of Environment