

**Statement by Donna and Jim Sinclair of St. Andrew's United Church,
North Bay, Ontario to the Ontario Energy Board,
Wednesday 2 April 2014**

Good evening. We are here on behalf of St. Andrew's United Church, a 300-member community in North Bay that is part of a larger national body, the United Church of Canada. We are two people who have grown up in Northern Ontario, and we are familiar with the delicate balance between making a living extracting resources from the earth, and at the same time caring for it in gratitude.

In this whole discussion about Energy East a major emphasis has been placed on the technical aspects of the project. They are important. But so are the social impacts and that's what we wish to speak about.

We are informed by two values that we cherish as people of faith: to live with respect in this land; and to seek justice for all our relations who inhabit it. ⁱ

Water, Worry and the Social Fabric

First of all, we are grateful for North Bay, its beauty and its water, once declared by Nobel Prize Laureate Dr. Frank Rowland to be "the best drinking water [his team] had ever tasted."

We are extremely concerned about Energy East's potential impact on it. This is not natural gas. Dilbit is a whole new ball game. Its proponents describe benefits, but universally neglect to mention the total extent of the damage that could occur in the event of a serious spill. Any business doing a risk assessment study would find this unacceptable -- unless its values did not take into account the larger common good.

The negative impacts of the proposed line also include damage to the social fabric when communities are split by the proposal and affected by continuing anxiety about a catastrophic spill devastating their watershed, groundwater, rural wells, and wildlife habitat.

This is not compatible with our value of "living with respect" on the land. It is not compatible with "seeking justice" for the 180 indigenous communities whose territories it will cross, nor those in small municipalities along the route who do not have the critical mass to fight this proposal. None of us wants to spend the rest of our lives worrying about pipeline leaks.

Who Can we Trust?

A second negative impact is the erosion of trust. After conversations with TransCanada staff, we are struck by the disconnect between the official utterances of the corporation and what we learn from other sources.

The day after TransCanada assured our city council of its laudable safety record, for instance, the National Energy Board released its report on TransCanada's compliance violations in the following areas: (1) hazard identification, risk assessment and control, (2) operational control in upset or abnormal operating conditions, (3) inspection, measurement and monitoring, and (4) management review.ⁱⁱ

Nor do we accept TransCanada's rationales as to why this line is important. First, this pipeline is not about Canadian energy security. Most of this product is destined for overseas markets.ⁱⁱⁱ Second, its promise of numerous long-term jobs is also questionable. TransCanada's job figures in the case of its sister pipeline the Keystone XL turned out to be vastly inflated.^{iv} If that is also true here, economic benefits for North Bay businesses would be time-limited and minimal.

The company also assures us that this conversion will generate \$35 billion for Canada over the next 40 years. What is not stated is what it will actually cost. Tar sands expansion to fill this pipeline would create carbon emissions equivalent to Ontario's projected savings from the closure of its coal-fired power plants. It is absurd for the province to make gains on one hand, and cancel them out on the other.

Furthermore, TransCanada, like other tar sands dependent companies, is completely silent about future clean-up costs from the massive tailings ponds generated by those operations. It seems to us that those extravagant costs – which are already being borne, in terms of health issues, by downstream First Nations -- will eventually fall to Canadian taxpayers, including us in Ontario and North Bay.

Damage to Democracy

Finally, in recent debates about various pipelines, one thing is clear. The federal government's great affection for them has created a growing democratic deficit. As a result of government and industry collusion,^v public participation in NEB hearings, where only a few years ago any citizen could speak, has become entangled in dense and restrictive rules.

We have no confidence that the federal government will protect us. Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq, for instance, reviewing a favourable decision about the expansion of Shell Oil's Jackpine project, said that "the significant adverse environmental effects that the designated project is likely to cause, are justified in the circumstances."^{vi}

Which suggests a crucial question for you as a Board: **How many Ontario regulations relating to source water protection will be trumped by the federal government on this project?**

In conclusion:

Few cities can equal the extraordinary citizen-led effort to preserve and enhance Lake Nipissing's spectacular waterfront. Thanks to this proposal, that same spirit is rising to protect Trout Lake. Ultimately, what we seek from our provincial government is that you act according to this precautionary principle: "First, do no harm."

We spell that out in two ways.

(1) that this city, and this beautiful land to which we are all connected, remain healthy and uncontaminated for future generations and

(2) that our city, and our province not be complicit in the further development of a petrostate already more famous internationally for its destruction of the climate, than its effort to seek the health of the planet.

Thank you

References to our statements are contained in our print-out.

ⁱ <http://www.united-church.ca/search?cse=A%20New%20Creed>

ⁱⁱ TransCanada Pipelines Limited - Audit Report OF-Surv-OpAud-T211-2012-2013 01 - Executive Summary

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://environmentaldefence.ca/blog/introducing-energy-east---export-pipeline-not-domestic-gain>

^{iv} http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/globallaborinstitute/research/upload/GLI_KeystoneXL_Reportpdf.pdf

^v <http://www.forestethics.org/news/industry-drafted-energy-board-rules-report-reveals>

^{vi} <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/potentially-damaging-jackpine-oilsands-mine-expansion-ok-d-by-ottawa-1.2454849>