

Bella Waterton

Good Evening,

According to the Province of Ontario's website, Ontario holds approximately 1/3 of the entire fresh water source in the world, coming from over 250 thousand lakes. The Energy East pipeline that TransCanada is proposing, goes through Ontario, and passes closely through many of Ontario's main freshwater sources, including the Great Lakes system- specifically, the pipeline will run closely to the two primary watersheds of the Nelson Rivers and the Great Lake – St. Lawrence watershed. In addition the proposed pipeline will cross 41 named rivers. Major ones being the Rideau, Madawaska, and Ottawa Rivers.

These 3 rivers are of great importance to the people of the Ottawa valley. This is where we get our clean drinking water from, where our children learn to swim, and where our economy booms from in the Summer months. The Ottawa river is known world-wide for its incredible white water and tourists make rafting, kayaking and canoeing on the Ottawa river a destination, year after year. With the proposed pipeline project, these incredible water sources will be at risk of irreversible pollution. The energy east pipeline does not bring one positive aspect to Ontario, and specifically the Ottawa valley area.

The Energy East Pipeline: A Danger to National Unity

The different perspectives surrounding the Energy East Pipeline project pose a need to explore the following question: “What forces are silencing arguments against the Energy East Pipeline and why is it being perceived as a necessity?” While TransCanada’s Energy East pipeline is a project that is being touted by some as a necessary step for national unity and economic security, it fails to take into account the bigger picture. There has and continues to be a crafting of a narrative that assumes the oil sands are Canada’s only viable option for prosperity and security. In examining the types of arguments made by those in favour of the project, it becomes evident that a specific nation-building rhetoric is being promoted alongside the construction of the pipeline which silences a majority of Canadians. As this discussion will show, few benefits of the pipeline will translate into actual benefits for Canadians despite the patriotism with which this project is being promoted.

The nationalist undertones of the Energy East Pipeline are most explicitly revealed in its comparison with historic nation-building projects such as the Trans-Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific Railway (Cattaneo 2013). While the contributions of these projects to Canadian industrial and social development have been celebrated and commemorated throughout the nation’s history, they certainly did not serve the interests of all Canadians. TransCanada and the Government of Canada insist on the necessity of the pipeline in linking Western Canada with the Maritimes. In the process of doing so, the pipeline will pose a significant threat to the personal security of

millions of Canadians by putting their drinking water sources at risk from a potential bitumen spill and continuing to ignore land treaties of First Nations communities.

The notion that the Maritimes will benefit from the shipping of 1.1 million barrels of crude oil from Alberta and thus spark national unity through economic prosperity for the struggling Eastern region is short sighted. Not only does this ignore the lack of longevity of the project and Alberta's oil sands, but it also ignores the millions of residents and ecosystems who are being put at risk along the Energy East route. The shipping of bitumen and the extreme difficulty it's clean up poses is an extremely important notion that is being overlooked (Ecology Ottawa 2014). In effect, the Energy East Pipeline places the economic benefits derived from shipping most of the produced oil to foreign markets over the livelihood of Canadians. In this sense, the nationalist rhetoric that is laced within the projects development begins to break down as more Canadians are being put at risk by the project than would be benefiting from it.

There are, however, some claims being made by the pro-pipeline crowd that are hard to ignore. Canada's reliance on foreign markets for the oil used for Canadian consumption would be reversed by allowing the free flow of oil sands crude across the nation (Harden, 19). Instead, Canadian oil would be exported out under a national brand and more Canadians could utilize more Canadian oil for domestic consumption by allowing it to reach more of its own refineries (Cattaneo 2013). This would allow Canada to assert its energy independence and develop a sense of sovereignty through its reduced dependence on foreign oil. Along the way, thousands of jobs would be created for Canadians during the planning, construction, and production stages of the project (TransCanada 2014).

All of these arguments seem to make the case for a strengthened Canadian identity both within Canada and globally. However, if these claims are critically examined, the Energy East Pipeline does not translate into an overall beneficial project. Jobs being created for Canadians in the fossil fuels industry, a finite resource, are inherently unsustainable. There will be limited long term opportunities for Canadians once the pipeline is complete and operating as oil sands productivity will inevitably begin to decline. The limited amount of jobs that will be created during the planning, construction, and operation stages of the Energy East project are being highlighted while the millions of Canadians whose drinking water and livelihoods will be put at risk from the pipeline's construction are being ignored. Additionally, with three deep-sea export ports being proposed by TransCanada, there is little assurance that the bitumen crude being sent to Eastern Canada will be refined in Canada (The Council of Canadians et al, 5). Of the three export sites, only Saint John, New Brunswick is located near an operating refinery. However, as it already operates at capacity based on Atlantic Canadian and American crude, it is very unlikely that crude shipped via the Energy East Pipeline will be refined on Canadian soil, a sentiment shared by the refinery's manager: "It's way more [crude] than we would ever use at this refinery (Canada's biggest), so the bulk of it would all be exported" (The Council of Canadians et al, 3).

If the pipeline is evaluated from a different perspective, one that incorporates the effects of the pipeline beyond Canada's borders and looks outside its fossil fuel dependency framework, the project becomes illogical. Why should Canada and Canadians continue to invest in a project that will one day cease to provide energy to Canadians and foreign markets? If energy security is a critical issue in need of a

sustainable solution, then renewable energy sources outside of the fossil fuel industry need to become a priority for Canada (Harden, 3). A significant amount of the crude that will be shipped to Eastern Canada will be exported to foreign markets, which does not necessarily place Canada's energy security at the forefront of this project's concerns. The project will significantly increase environmentally destructive activity in the oil sands, in shipping ports in Eastern Canada, as well as contributing to global warming through the utilization of Canadian crude in foreign markets. Thus, the patriotic package in which the Energy East Pipeline is being promoted is deceptive. Unsustainable employment, export-based oil sands expansion, and threatening the drinking water security of millions of Canadians are critical elements of the project that are being ignored by lobbyists.

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