

Milan Ilnyckyj
Toronto, Ontario
milan.ilnyckyj@gmail.com

Re: The Northern Gateway pipeline

Secretary to the Joint Review Panel
Joint Review Panel - Enbridge Northern Gateway Project
444 Seventh Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T2P 0X8

7 March 2012

Members of the Joint Review Panel,

I am writing to strongly encourage you to express your opposition to the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline which is intended to carry bitumen from the oil sands to Kitimat for export. You should oppose the pipeline for two major sets of reasons: because of the local risks created by the project in the short- and medium-term and because of how it contributes dangerously to the long-term risk of climate change. Building up the oil sands is a way of investing in yesterday's energy sources, at considerable risk to all future generations. We should be working on winding down our fossil fuel industries, not building huge new export corridors.

The short-term risks associated with this project are considerable, and the consequences of an accident would be tragic. I was born in Vancouver and grew up in British Columbia. The province is rightly regarded as one of the most beautiful places in the world. With hundreds of tankers a year passing through the rocky and dangerous waters near Kitimat, it is only a matter of time before there is a spill. Similarly, there will always be the danger of a breach of the pipeline contaminating one or more of BC's essential rivers, particularly given the fact that BC is a seismically active area. Tourism is also a key industry in British Columbia. The few jobs created by running the pipeline will be more than cancelled out by tourism losses in the event of an accident. Furthermore, the past behaviour of major oil companies after accidents shows what the template will be in British Columbia – deny responsibility for the spill, then do everything possible to limit the amount of legal compensation paid.

The long-term risks of exploiting the oil sands are even greater than the short-term risks from spills. Already, there is a dangerous amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It threatens to melt the world's great ice sheets, causing several metres of sea level rise. It is changing

precipitation patterns all over the world, with consequences as wide-ranging as stormwater problems in cities, agricultural problems, and problems with water management in hydroelectric power systems. Positive feedbacks like reduced albedo from melting ice and the release of methane from permafrost threaten to add to whatever level of warming created directly by human beings. The combination of these positive feedbacks with the enormous amount of carbon that could be released from fossil fuel reserves like the oil sands threatens catastrophic climate change scenarios, with tens of metres of sea level rise and other severe and permanent impacts all over the world. Climate change especially threatens people who are already living in extreme poverty. By developing the oil sands, Canada is effectively transferring wealth from the people who will be harmed by climate change to the people who will profit from selling these fossil fuels. That is unfair and unjust. Canada does not have the right to enrich itself by harming others – especially when we enjoy a high standard of living, and many of those who will be most badly harmed by climate change already live in poverty and insecurity. Canada does not have the right to threaten the world's low-lying regions with destruction, just because it is profitable for us in the short-term to dig up and sell oil.

Stopping climate change means stopping the buildup of greenhouse gas pollution in the atmosphere. Doing that requires the global phase-out of fossil fuels, as well as the protection of carbon sinks like forests. Bulldozing boreal forest so that we can use natural gas to liquefy bitumen to export is absolutely the wrong course of action in a world challenged by climate change. That is especially true given how high Canadian greenhouse gas emissions per capita already are. Canada must do its fair share in helping the world address the challenge of climate change. That means sharply cutting our emissions, not allowing the oil and gas sector to continue to grow without limit. Indeed, it must be kept in mind that the total pollution associated with the oil sands does not just consist of the pollution produced in Canada. The pollution produced when the exported fuels are burned must also be considered, given that this is where most of the climate-harming impact from the oil sands arises. It would be better for the whole world if Canada left the oil sands underground and invested instead in energy sources that do not impose terrible risks on people everywhere.

The Northern Gateway pipeline is a dangerous means of serving an unworthy end. Canada should be phasing out fossil fuels, not expanding them, and it certainly should not be expanding their production through the construction of pipelines that threaten places as ecologically diverse and important as the coast of British Columbia. Fifty years from now, the question on everybody's mind will be: "Why didn't people in 2012 do more about climate change? Why didn't they invest in

clean energy, instead of digging us deeper into the pit dug by fossil fuel dependence?" The right choice here is to reject this pipeline, and I hope that will be your recommendation.

Thank you for your time,

Milan Ilnyckyj, BA, MPhil