

PM needs to sell Canadians on energy

Tallying up the benefits of pipelines would get the public on side

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A measly 230 jobs from new pipelines. That's how Alberta's and Canada's future is still being sold in British Columbia. Worse, the sales effort is directed at the local communities "home" to potential new pipelines to new markets. Their response, a resounding "No thanks," allows Canadians to weigh in on the need for new pipelines this way: Well, if that's all that's at stake, who needs new pipelines to new markets.

The sales job on new pipelines to new markets is a national disgrace. Few Canadians feel connected to the issue. Many have already put it behind them. That's what happens when the task of selling something that's in the national interest is placed in the wrong hands.

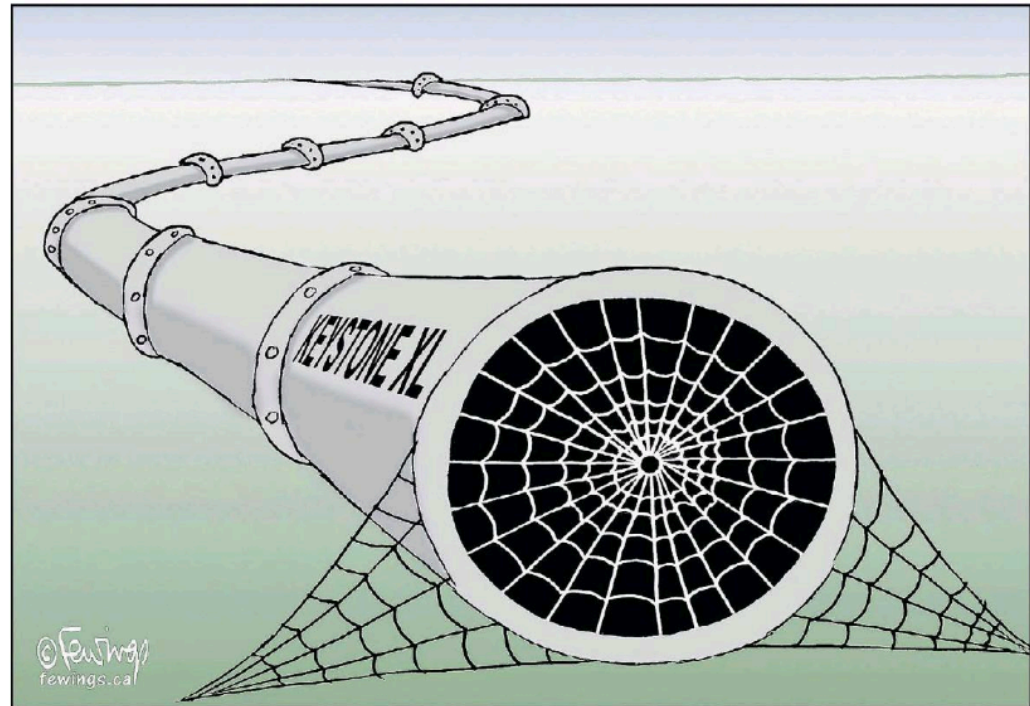
It will take Prime Minister Stephen Harper to show us all that while pipeline opponents are important, they're not all important — the needs of 35 million Canadians matter more.

Most Canadians still don't know that we have only one customer for our oil. Nor do they know that in late 2013, for the first time in almost two decades, the U.S. produced more crude oil than it imported. With our only customer awash in oil, Keystone is a vampire pipeline — a pipeline for suckers willing to provide even greater discounts to our only customer who knows we can't get our oil to anyone but them.

New pipelines pointed in the right direction are required to get our product to new markets. Yet, despite all this change in our one customer, left unaltered has been the effort to seek approval from Canadians on the need for new pipelines.

Absent an effort to show how all Canadians benefit from existing pipelines in the core aspects of who we are — i.e., in health care, public education, infrastructure, CPP, OAS and myriad other services and programs that are the roots of our Canadian lives — the gain from new pipelines continues to be presented as something that serves those who work in oil.

Canadians' understanding of our link to pipelines remains shaped by those who oppose them. If Canadians are to embrace the need for new pipelines to new markets, we need to know the benefits we each receive from that which flows through existing pipelines. We're calling for the creation of a Petroleum-Impact Index, a measure pinpointing by



province, by region and by demographic group, the benefits manifest in our communities and our lives from what flows through existing pipelines to our only customer.

Whether it's through bias or just a lack of facts on the role played in our individual lives by that which flows through existing pipelines, we Canadians mistakenly and dangerously default to seeing petroleum as an Alberta thing: We're not in Alberta so we don't derive any benefit from oil. And environmentalists, First Nations and others say pipelines are bad. With no evidence that my life benefits from that which flows through existing pipelines, and with none of these groups saying



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that they benefit from oil, it seems like only a very few do benefit — the ones telling us we need more pipelines. Those new pipelines just aren't worth the risk for so little benefit, and to so few.

Those with expertise in petroleum — Alberta, oil companies, pipeline builders — have neither the wherewithal nor the credibility to develop and advance any kind of initiative that demonstrates that the product and the pipelines that would get it to new markets are in the national interest. That's the domain of Canada's prime minister.

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ta's for the nature of the product, how it's extracted, and the role it plays in shaping so much of the province. And there is no more credible voice than the pipeline builders for how they'll build and operate their pipelines. But asking Alberta and pipeline builders to place the work they do in the context of national interest? Every time they speak, they support — perfectly — pipeline opponents' assertions that new pipelines are all about greed.

Proof of the failure of this approach and of how it dooms all Canadians' need for new pipelines is found in a petroleum industry-supported B.C. newspaper supplement in which the Kinder Morgan Canada CEO asserted his company's project would result in 40 or 50 permanent jobs in B.C. Even the reporter had to explore that revelation, asking, "Aside from the few jobs and increased taxes, are there other ways the company might help communities?"

In media reports on the losing campaign by Northern Gateway in a non-binding

B.C. community plebiscite on that pipeline, we learned that "Northern Gateway's campaign concentrated on the promise of 180 permanent, direct, local jobs worth \$17 million and more spinoff jobs for contractors and suppliers."

Both companies, excellent at building pipelines, are neither qualified nor credible in selling the need for them. Their efforts preserve the status quo in the public's understanding of the need for new pipelines to new markets: A few jobs, but we don't live there, so not for us or our kids. And with no benefits to us from what flows through existing pipelines, we're unlikely to get anything out of this new one, either. Those folks opposing it are right; we just don't need new pipelines.

Would we ask British Columbia and its forestry companies to educate all Canadians on the value of the forestry industry to each Canadian before national action is taken on forestry? Would we ask Ontario and its manufacturers to educate the country on the value of manufacturing as a prerequisite to federal action on manufacturing? We would not. So why is this burden foisted on Alberta? Why does Alberta have to sing

for a supper that we all enjoy?

It's unfair to task Alberta and pipeline companies to demonstrate a national interest, and unwise to think business groups will do any better. Absent the data produced by a Petroleum-Impact Index on the substantive, life-shaping benefits and services that Canadians rely upon — all made possible by what flows through existing pipelines — such business community efforts can only focus on jobs in pipeline construction and servicing, and on the products we use that are somehow based on oil production. That approach plays into the hands of the disturbingly Canada-oriented, largely U.S.-funded groups expert in telling us that by weaning ourselves off oil-derived consumables, there's no need for new pipelines to new customers, so no need for Canadians to care about them.

So, enough now. Prime Minister Harper's action to produce a Petroleum-Impact Index will show the value of this economic activity to all Canadians, and the benefits it supports in our individual lives. His leadership in this way will allow us to understand what's at risk for all Canadians if petroleum revenues are reduced or eliminated, and the resulting impact on the quality of life we enjoy and seek to preserve for our benefit, for that of our children, and for their children, too.

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