



PRESS RELEASE, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, May 31, 2021

Prayer Circle facing arrest at TM construction site

Judging from the news of late, the era of oil and gas is coming to an end. On May 21st, the most influential energy outfit in the world [stated that](#) “there is no need for investment in new fossil fuel supply”. Bill McKibben [thinks](#) it’s a “crucial turning point in the climate era.” Alongside the other recent landmark decisions (e.g., [Shell](#), [youth climate justice in Germany](#), [investors pulling out of LNG](#)), climate activists are hopeful that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will finally address his [2019 promise](#) of a just transition.

In western Canada, these trends are not evident with regards the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project. Although TMX is behind schedule, over-budget, lacking numerous permits, and [losing investors](#), and in spite of the IEA’s recent call for the fossil fuel industry to gear down, TMX is busy preparing to [drill under Burnaby Mountain](#) and [under the Fraser River](#). At Coquitlam, TMX recently broke ground to build temporary workspaces for construction of a trenchless pipeline crossing to the Brunette River.

This morning, a prayer circle gathered at the Brunette in meditation and prayer to prevent destruction of riparian critical habitat for the Nooksack dace (*Rhinichthys cataractae*), which is listed as Endangered under Schedule 1 of the Species At Risk Act. This small minnow-like fish has lived in the region since the continental ice sheet began its retreat 10,000 years ago. In 2020, [Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#) (DFO) authorized vegetation clearing at this location, acknowledging that the work will “likely result in prohibited impacts to Nooksack dace and their critical habitat” or cause “serious harm”.

The inter-faith group is concerned that the construction, mitigation and reclamation plans authorized by DFO will not suffice to maintain this population. Catherine Hembling, a Unitarian who is prepared for arrest said, “The Canada Energy Regulator, BC Oil and Gas Commission and DFO have given TM permission and authorization to clear vegetation in the riparian zone outside the ‘least risk window’, but it is clear that this beautiful greenspace - a jewel in our urban environment - will be destroyed with no possibility of re-creation nor restoration. Plus, we know the approval process for the project was rigged, since consideration of downstream climate impacts was prohibited.” She continued, “When [Burnaby’s municipal by-laws to protect urban forest and park-land were over-ruled](#), it became clear to us that someone needs to speak up. Personally, I cannot allow thousands of trees to be cut down for such a short-sighted project.”

Ruth Walmsley, a Quaker and founding member of Burnaby Residents Opposing KinderMorgan Expansion (BROKE) said: “As a person of faith, I am mindful of the moral imperative to think seven generations into the future. We are called to leave a world that will continue to support life as we know it, for present and future generations. I have pursued many different avenues to express my opposition but at this point, with construction of the TMX proceeding, I feel I have no option left other than non-violent civil disobedience. I am just one person, but I know that I am part of a much larger tide, and I believe that tide is turning. Enough is enough! Too much has already been lost. Let us see what love can do.”

Christine Thuring, a Buddhist and plant ecologist, said: “The ethical precept of non-harm is honoured by all faith traditions, and our expression today of love and altruism is all-inclusive. Ecological destruction and the long-term pollution of unceded indigenous territory and waters is not good for anyone or anything. Pushing species to extinction during a climate emergency and extinction crisis is inconsolable. Today, my friends and I are stepping up to give voice to the potency of this moment: there is still time to cancel this dangerous project! Our expression of love and care extends to all beings, including future generations, fish, orca, birds, insects and plants, as well as TMX workers, security guards and their families. As a Buddhist, my ethical practice calls me to challenge this destruction and danger. I am prepared to go to prison for this peaceful non-violent direct action, if that is what is required.”

Civil disobedience is nothing new for this project. In 2018, after the Trudeau government bought the pipeline from Kinder Morgan, hundreds of people were arrested at the gates of the TMX terminal facility on Burnaby Mountain, including Green Party leader Elizabeth May and Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart.

The Cities of New Westminster and Burnaby oppose the pipeline. Local groups, including Protect the Planet Stop TMX (PPST), Mountain Protectors, Extinction Rebellion Vancouver, Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion (BROKE), Climate Convergence, Dogwood, STAND.earth and Wilderness Committee, have rallied around the tree-top protest camp. Will George, a member of Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Protect the Inlet, is supportive of the blockade; “We at Protect the Inlet will support anyone willing to do direct action, as our window gets smaller and smaller to stop the construction of the pipeline that, if completed, will increase tanker traffic through our waters by 700%.” Chief Rhonda Larrabee of the Qayqayt Nation also supports the action.

BACKGROUND

The \$12-18 billion pipeline project was purchased from Texas oil giant Kinder Morgan by the federal government in 2018. Costs on the pipeline have ballooned since the purchase. The project is opposed by the Squamish Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Coldwater Indian Band, who were denied leave to appeal

by the Supreme Court of Canada. It also conflicts with Canada's commitment under the Paris Climate Agreement to keep global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degree Celsius. The project would impact numerous drinking water sources along the route, Burrard Inlet and Tsleil-Waututh, Qayqayt and other First Nations, Burnaby Mountain and Simon Fraser University. It would also spell a 7-fold increase in tanker traffic in the Burrard inlet and an increased threat to the endangered Southern Resident Orcas. The Province of British Columbia, the State of Washington, and 20 municipalities oppose the pipeline project, including the Cities of New Westminster and Burnaby.

The existing Trans Mountain pipeline is already a major environmental and public health hazard with a [long history of disastrous spills](#). In June 2020, 50,000 gallons of crude oil [spilled](#) from a pump station located above an aquifer that supplies the Sumas First Nation with drinking water. The thirteen 67-year old tanks at the terminus of the pipeline are too close together to put out in the event of a fire, according to the Burnaby Fire Department. 240,000 people live within the 4.2 km radius of the site that is considered an evacuation zone including 32,000 members of the SFU community. A [growing number](#) of insurers have pulled out of the pipeline project; those still involved [are facing pressure to divest](#). In November 2020, the Canada Energy Regulator [released a report](#) stating that there is no need for any pipeline expansion if Canada takes measures to curb GHGs, and a [recent warning from economists](#) notes that the TransMountain project is no longer financially viable. Indigenous groups, as well as the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have pointed out the connection between resource extraction man-camps and [violence against Indigenous women](#).

The coalition of environmental groups supporting the Brunette protection camps includes, but is not limited to, PPST-Protect the Planet Stop TMX, Mountain Protectors, Protect the Inlet, STAND.earth, Extinction Rebellion Vancouver, Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion (BROKE), Climate Convergence, Dogwood, and Wilderness Committee.

Web: www.stopTMX.ca

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/StopTMX>

Tweet: @PPSTMX1

###