

Media Advisory, April 8 2022

Activists to stage oil tanker protest at infamous False Creek barge

Award Winning Environmentalist Tzeporah Berman and Dr. Tim Takaro call attention to risk of oil spill from Trans Mountain oil tanker and pipeline project

When: Friday April 8th beginning at 9:30 am

Where: [Izyelshn - Sunset Beach Park](#) (near the Beach Ave. and Broughton St. entrance). Parking is available onsite. Photos will be uploaded in [this drive](#) throughout the day and available for media use.

What: Early this morning, activists, including noted environmentalist Tzeporah Berman and public health expert Dr. Tim Takaro, will climb the False Creek Barge to hang banners with messages that call attention to the risk of oil spill projects from the Trans Mountain oil tanker and pipeline project (TMX).

Why: If the TMX project is completed, it will result in a seven fold increase in oil tanker traffic in Vancouver Harbour, which significantly increases the risk of an oil spill. The recent announcement by the federal government, that they will not invest more public funds in the project, is a serious setback for the pipeline which is less than half built and now needs to find at least \$8 billion in funding from private investors.

Background: On the heels of the IPCC's latest report where the UN Secretary General called any investment in new fossil fuels infrastructure "moral and economic madness," if Canada moves forward with projects like TMX, or the recently approved Bay du Nord project, the country is well on a path of further entrenching its dependence on fossil fuels while accelerating the climate crisis.

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Cision/web posting time: wait for signal notification

Public health expert and award winning environmentalist occupy famous barge in Vancouver to call attention to risk of oil spill from Trans Mountain oil tankers

Seven fold increase in oil tanker traffic threatens Vancouver Harbour

Unceded Coast Salish Territories (VANCOUVER, BC) — Early this morning, activists, including noted environmentalist Tzeporah Berman and public health expert Dr. Tim Takaro, climbed the False Creek Barge to hang banners from the barge with messages like “What if this was an oil spill?” If the Trans Mountain Expansion is completed it will result in a seven fold increase in oil tanker traffic in Vancouver Harbour, which significantly increases the risk of an oil spill.

On the heels of the IPCC’s [latest report](#) where the UN Secretary General called any investment in new fossil fuels infrastructure “moral and economic madness,” if Canada moves forward with projects like Trans Mountain, or the recently approved [Bay du Nord](#) project, the country is well on a path of further entrenching its dependence on fossil fuels while accelerating the climate crisis.

*“On the heels of the latest IPCC report and the devastating federal approval of Bay du Nord, the barge is yet another clear example of government lies,” said **Tzeporah Berman, International Programs Director, Stand.earth** from on top of the barge. “The federal government and the oil industry want us to believe that a dramatic increase in oil tankers right through Vancouver’s harbour is safe, yet they couldn’t even stop this barge from crashing and as yet hasn’t figured out how to remove it? What if this had been an oil spill? It doesn’t exactly inspire confidence.”*

A [study conducted for Metro Vancouver](#) found that a spill of tar sands crude in Vancouver Harbour could have serious local health impacts due to exposure to toxic gases or fire from the extremely dangerous form of oil being transported by the Trans Mountain Expansion. Despite concerns raised by local government, residents groups, and public health experts, a full public health review of the impacts of the project is yet to be conducted.

*“A spill of diluted bitumen in Burrard Inlet could be catastrophic for public health and everyone who depends upon these waters for work and pleasure, food and culture,” said **Dr. Tim Takaro**. “A major spill would require the evacuation of between 24,000-105,000 people and increase cancer risk in those exposed.”*

The recent announcement by the federal government that they will **not** invest more public funds in the project, is a serious setback for the pipeline. The project is currently less than halfway built, years behind schedule, and now needs to find at least \$8 billion in funding from private investors to cover growing construction costs that now top \$21 billion.

Analysis [by the Parliamentary Budget Office](#) and [Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis \(IEEFA\)](#) called into question whether the pipeline is viable at this construction price and predicted that taxpayers will have to continue to pour money into the project if it is to be completed. Stand.earth is calling on the federal government to cancel this project in order to truly get taxpayers off the hook for future losses.

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Bios:

Tzeporah Berman is an adjunct professor of environmental studies at York University, chair of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, and the international program director at Stand.Earth.

Tim Takaro is professor emeritus for environmental and occupational health sciences at Simon Fraser University and researches health impacts of climate change.. He is also a medical doctor.

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Backgrounder available here: [Risk on a Trans Mountain Oil Spill](#)

Backgrounder: Risk on a Trans Mountain Oil Spill

What is the risk of a spill in Vancouver Harbour?

If the proposed pipeline is implemented, the likelihood of a spill in the Burrard Inlet over fifty years lies at **79-87%** for any size spill.¹

- Smaller spills (1,000 barrels) are very likely
- There is a 37% chance of a larger spill (10,000 barrels) over fifty years
- There is a 29% likelihood of a worst-case spill (100,000 barrels) over fifty years

The likelihood of a spill is worsened by the fact that tankers must pass through the Second Narrows Movement Restricted Area of the Burrard Inlet. This means that, due to their weight and size, tankers will remain in the Inlet longer because they will have to wait until daylight high tide before being escorted back by a tug.

What would the environmental impacts of a spill be?

An oil spill because of TMEX could lead to major environmental catastrophe.²

- Stranded oil along the shoreline of Burrard Inlet will provide a long-term reservoir of contamination, and intertidal communities may take years to recover.
- A reasonable worst-case spill could result in the mortality of 100,000 to 500,000 birds and trigger major disruptions of food-web dynamics, resulting in environmental collapse.
- Embryos of finfish and shellfish that develop in the intertidal zone may die from the toxic effects of stranded oil.
- Even oil spills smaller than the reasonable worst-case scenario can have substantial adverse effects on birds, marine mammals, and intertidal communities.

¹[http://rem-main.rem.sfu.ca/papers/gunton/km_tig_spill_risk_final_report_Upper_Nicola_Band_Expert_Report_An_Assessment_of_Spill_Risk_for_the_TMEP_\(00250905xC6E53\)_-A4Q1T7.pdf](http://rem-main.rem.sfu.ca/papers/gunton/km_tig_spill_risk_final_report_Upper_Nicola_Band_Expert_Report_An_Assessment_of_Spill_Risk_for_the_TMEP_(00250905xC6E53)_-A4Q1T7.pdf)

²<https://livingoceans.org/sites/default/files/Fate-Effect-Oil-Spills-TransMountain-Expansion-Project-Burrard-Inlet-Fraser.pdf>

What are the impacts on human health could a spill cause?

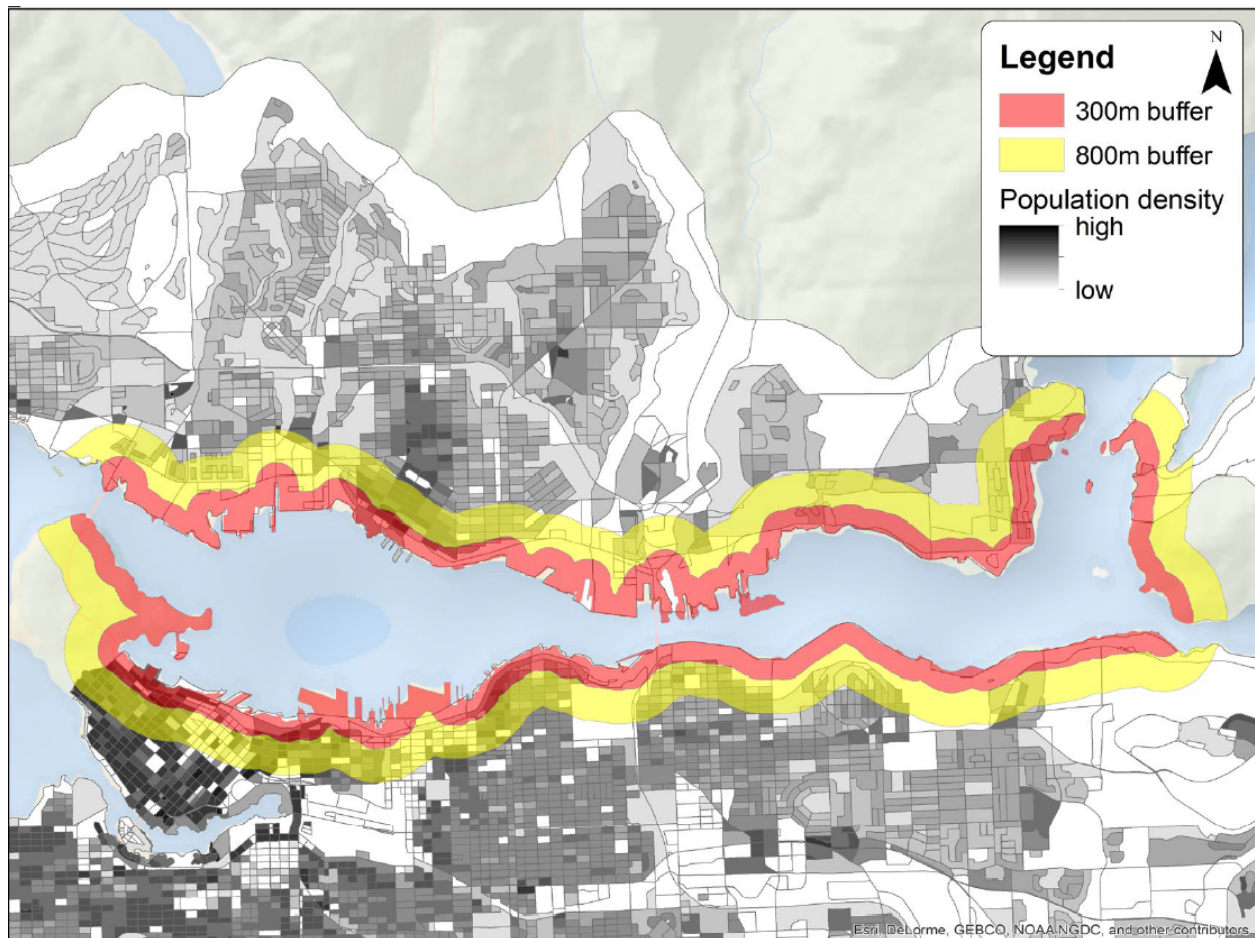
- Dilbit is a mixture of condensate (very flammable light hydrocarbon) and bitumen (tar), and once spilled, the condensate rapidly evaporates or burns, creating inhalation and safety hazards.³
- Dilbit contains several known carcinogens including benzene, benzo-A-pyrene and 1,3-butadiene. None have a no known safe threshold of exposure.
- A primary health concern from this project, childhood leukemia, which can arise from benzene exposure due to the routine operations at Westridge Marine Terminal and from an oil spill. Other exposure-related health impacts include increased risk of cardiovascular and respiratory illness, mental health effects from trauma due to evacuation, anxiety and fear of cancer effects from exposure, reproductive disorders or birth defects (e.g., neural tube defects), cancers, and death.
- A reasonable worst-case spill at Westridge Marine Terminal has the potential to expose over 1,000,000 residents to acute health effects from toxic air emissions.⁴
- The Tsleil Waututh use the Inlet as a food source and for important cultural and commercial activities.
- Clean-up workers would inevitably be exposed and suffer health impacts as observed with many spills around the world.

³<https://livingoceans.org/sites/default/files/Fate-Effect-Oil-Spills-TransMountain-Expansion-Project-Burrard-Inlet-Fraser.pdf>

⁴https://docs2.cer-rec.gc.ca/ll-eng/llisapi.dll/fetch/2000/90464/90552/548311/956726/2392873/2449925/2451574/2785067/C234-7-7_-_Exhibit_03%2C_Air_Quality_Impacts_from_Simulated_Oil_Spills_in_Burrard_Inlet_and_English_Bay_-_A4L7Y8.pdf?nodeid=2785204&vernum=-2

Population at risk: present day

For emergency planning and evacuation estimates, the Canadian National Oil Spill Preparedness and Response Regime characterises a large spill as greater than one barrel of sweet crude.⁵ The figure shows the population that would be impacted by a large spill of approximately 500,000 barrels or 67% of an Aframax tanker filled to capacity within the Inlet⁶ using Health Canada's Emergency Response Guidebook. The 300 m buffer (red) would require evacuation of over 24,000 people. If the spill ignited over 105,000 people would need to be evacuated (yellow buffer).



⁵ Note that this guidance is for sweet crude which is less volatile than dilbit – which means that a greater evacuation zone is likely to be required for dilbit immediately following a similar spill and for several days following depending upon weather conditions.

⁶ Data used to create the figure are from the 2016 census population data at the dissemination block level from Statistics Canada downloaded from the Government of Canada's open data portal (<https://open.canada.ca/en/open-data>) along with the 2016 Dissemination block shapefile. The inside buffers were created using the Buffer Wizard tool in ArcGIS by specifying distances (300 and 800m) from the shoreline. The 2016 population census data at the dissemination block level was converted to population density (population/km²) using standard methods.

A recent history of oil spills in B.C.

Nathan E. Stewart - October 13, 2016

The Nathan E. Stewart, a tug pushing a fuel barge, ran aground and sank off Bella Bella, B.C. in the traditional waters of the Heiltsuk Nation, spilling 110,000 litres of diesel fuel, lubricants, heavy oils, and other pollutants. Fortunately the tug was on the return leg of its voyage, meaning that it had already offloaded most of the oil products the vessel was carrying, which limited the size of the spill. The cause of the spill was determined to be human error. This incident revealed weaknesses in spill response especially when it came to coordinating with First Nations governments.

MV Marathassa - April 8, 2015

The grain carrier MV Marathassa leaked approximately 2,700 litres of bunker fuel into Vancouver's English Bay. This spill raised serious questions about how spill response is coordinated. It took over four and half hours for clean up crews to arrive on scene despite the fact that the agency responsible says it can respond to spills in the harbour in 40 mins and it took over 12 hours for the city of Vancouver to be notified.⁷ The spill response revealed confusion and a lack of coordination between the overlapping federal, provincial, and local jurisdictions. It also caused alarm about the exposure to toxins, as many local residents showed up at local beaches to volunteer to help with the clean up, despite warnings that exposure to bunker fuel is a potential health risk.

Westridge Pipeline Rupture - July 24, 2007

Although this spill began on land when an excavator ruptured the Trans Mountain pipeline just a few blocks from the Westridge Tanker Terminal, causing a large plumb of oil to spray into the air for 25 minutes. However oil quickly flowed through storm sewers into Burrard Inlet and a neighbouring creek. Roughly 234,000 litres of oil was spilled, 40 per cent of which found its way into the Inlet. The incident led to the evacuation of approximately 250 residents of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The investigation into the spill found that the construction was planned with design drawings from 1957 and that did not accurately place the pipeline and that the initial decision by Trans Mountain to stop deliveries to Westridge Terminal increased the

⁷<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/marathassa-timeline/article23989939/>

volume of crude oil spilled and was not in conformity with standard emergency shut-down procedures.⁸

⁸<https://www.tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/pipeline/2007/p07h0040/p07h0040.html>