

"Trans Mountain is a false fight in the fair transition to a low carbon economy"

Minister Morneau made a tough decision in the federal government's purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Pipeline conflicts are over a decade in the making and are ripe for the blame game.

A string of Alberta Premiers rebuffing opposition from outside, a former Prime Minister dismissing regulatory and democratic due process, activists ignoring the economic and cultural significance of the oil and gas sector to Albertans, an industry that thought itself impervious to criticism – any and all of these in whatever proportion.

As people who've spent years trying to create positive momentum on the climate change issue, the point of us putting our thoughts down about the Trans Mountain project is not to say who is right or who is wrong, but to recognize the risk to the country if we lose the middle ground in the climate debate.

Sadly, the current climate for this conversation in Canada, makes us seem more like our neighbours to the South where environmental activists battle it out with climate change deniers and, in the end, little is accomplished. More polarization equals less progress of any kind.

We agree with Finance Minister Morneau that Canada needs to continue to be prosperous in the transition from fossil fuels to a low carbon economy, and that transition, while underway, has decades to go. Public support for the transition would never be sustained if governments ignored the jobs people need, the cost of the goods and services they use, and the fact that there are competing priorities in life.

In the meantime, any further economic hardship in Alberta would continue to solidify opposition to climate action, a concept apparently lost on those who wish to see Canada succeed in meeting its international climate commitments – and think it can be accomplished by government alone, irrespective of the support of people.

Expanding the capacity of the Trans Mountain pipeline is a compromise Canada needs if we are to build national consensus to support a low carbon economy.

In the same way that environmentalists see the pipeline as an iconic representation of the evils of oil, business professionals see the lack of a pipeline as an iconic representation of government mismanagement of infrastructure and investment, and Albertans see the opposition to pipelines as a disregard for their economic and cultural wellbeing.

Moving forward, all levels of government need to make a renewed national commitment to better integrate the economy and the environment including:

- Fulfilling our Paris climate commitments using carbon pricing and other complementary policy tools;
- Cooperating in building infrastructure that meets world class environmental standards, and allows Canada to provide energy to domestic and international markets;
- Participating in the expansion of East-West electricity grid capacity and related distributed energy infrastructure; and
- Fully respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and pursuing cultural and economic reconciliation with them.



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