Labour fighting back against Gallant's cuts and privatization

How do you stop a pipeline when one family owns both the oil and the media?

By LYNAYA ASTEPHEN

I am a proud resident of Red Head, Saint John, a small rural community with quiet roads and beautiful coastal views.

TransCanada is proposing a 1.1 million barrel per day pipeline from Alberta to Saint John. After travelling almost the entire length of the country, it would end at a new deep water port on the Bay of Fundy. The Energy East project also includes a massive tank "farm" to store the oil that would be loaded onto waiting ships — across the street from my home.

Why do I oppose Energy East?

I'm worried about the air we breathe.

Saint John is highly industrialized, and residents are already exposed to increased health risks from air pollution, not to mention the oil smells near Irving's new rail facility. We have, among other industries, Irving Oil's export terminal and the Canaport LNG terminal. We have 38 times the industrial pollution of Fredericton and 243 times that of Moncton. A recent study found lung cancer rates 30 per cent higher in Saint John than in either of these communities. The widows of health care, seen here, protested the death of public health care at that rally. Photo courtesy of Maggie MacDonald.

I am having trouble trusting TransCanada and Irving Oil. Despite several requests, TransCanada has refused to hold a public meeting with Red Head residents with an open question-and-answer period. A recent Reuters investigation of the New Brunswick Department of Energy found that since 2012, Irving's export terminal has experienced at least 19 accidents classified as "environmental emergencies." In 2013, Irving received a formal warning for taking more than a day to report a storage tank leak at the Canaport facility.

According to National Energy Board statistics, TransCanada has had more pipeline ruptures than any other company in Canada. The company's electronic monitoring equipment won't even detect a spill that is less than 1.5 per cent of the pipeline's capacity. This means over 2 million litres can spill before anyone is alerted.

My concerns don't stop at the end of my driveway.

The Energy East project would see 115 oil tankers per day pipeline spill in 2010. This cost Enbridge more than $1 billion to clean up, yet submerged oil remains on the river bed to this day.

One federal study found diluted bitumen sunk and formed "tar balls" in marine conditions similar to the Bay of Fundy. A major spill that occurs during loading of the tankers or when the tankers are leaving wouldn't just threaten whales. It could be a serious blow for all ocean-dependent economies and jobs.

A draft federal report accessed through freedom of information admits that not enough is known about the potential toxic effects of tar sands crude in our waterways. Energy East passes through or comes near more than 300 waterways, including at least six of the St. John River's main tributaries.

I want to do my part in helping protect future generations.

The Energy East pipeline would create more climate pollution than any single Atlantic province.

A recent scientific report says 85 per cent of Canada's tar sands need to stay in the ground if we are to avoid the worst of climate change. Industry wants to double production by 2030 and will pursue both pipeline and rail expansion to export their product. Filling the Energy East pipeline would allow a close to 40 per cent increase in tar sands production.

We can do better. This export pipeline puts so much at risk for such short-term benefit. There is much more at stake than profit.

Lynaya Astephen is a resident of Red Head and the spokesperson for the Red Head-Anthony's Cove Preservation Association.

Editors' note: The Telegraph-Journal, owned by J.K. Irving, refused to publish this commentary.

Who will stand up for Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women? Not Bernard Valcourt

When the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for a national inquiry on the 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada on June 2, 2015, all stood to show their support except Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Earlier this year, Minister Valcourt said suicides of Aboriginal youth are parents' problem, not his. Suicides in Aboriginal youth occur five to six times more often than non-Aboriginal youth.
Crossing the line for the land: indigenous land defenders share stories as Canada passes Bill C-51

By TRACY GLYNN

Crisanta Perez, a Maya Mam woman from Guatemala, shared her story of being criminalized for defending her community’s lands and water from Goldcorp, a Canadian mining company, to audiences in Fredericton, Tatamagouche, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto in early June 2015. Photo by Miles Howe.

Perez became a target for repression in 2008 when she damaged a power line to the mine that was placed on her property. She tried to get the assistance. Two of the women faced charges for over the mine’s operations” when they came to her as the Goldcorp 8, were charged with “obstructing criminalization and violence against opponents.

Goldcorp has operated the Marlin gold and silver open-pit mine for over a decade in the San Marcos district of Guatemala. A 29-year-old Tremblay joined a convoy from his community to support the Mohawks when they were under siege for resisting a golf course expansion on their territory.

While en route to Oka, Tremblay said his convoy was stopped, surrounded and held by armed police in Levis, Quebec. They eventually made it to Oka where Tremblay recalled a military officer pointed a gun into his forehead after he told the officer to stop pointing his gun at a woman holding a sign that said, “Go fight a real war.” Tremblay remarked, “It was all over a 9-hole golf course.”

Tremblay and others with the newly formed Peace and Friendship Alliance have been vocal opponents to Bill C-51, which passed the Canadian Senate by 44 votes to 28 on June 9. The bill will become law after receiving Royal Assent from the Governor-General.

The Oka Crisis is only one example of how indigenous people in Canada on the front lines of resistance to development in their territories have been attacked by the police and spied on with reasons of being suspected threats to public security and terrorists.

The 63-page omnibus Bill C-51 gives increased powers to CSIS, Canada’s security intelligence agency, to spy on citizens who it believes are threats and gives the agency the power to disrupt the activities of their targets.

Indigenous land defenders and environmental activists on the front lines of resistance to oil pipelines, shale gas and mines fear the consequences of the new law but say they remain firm in their resolve to defend the land, water, air, climate and people.

A new campaign, Kill Bill C-51, has been launched and is expected to be a topic of discussion during the federal election campaign. The Conservative and Liberal parties supported the Bill while the Opposition NDP and Green Party opposed it.

Tracy Glynn is a member of the Fredericton committee of the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network and a news writer and editor with the NB Media Co-op.