

North Shore nations united in pipeline protest

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Paddlers from Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and other Coastal First Nations perform a water ceremony in front of Kinder Morgan's Westridge Marine Terminal.

CNW Group/Tsleil-Waututh Nation photo

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Saturday brought strange traffic to Kinder Morgan's Westridge Marine oil tanker port, as two North Shore First Nations put paddle to water to protest the company's plans for pipeline expansion.

The on-the-water ceremony was the culmination of a canoe journey that saw dozens of paddlers from both the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations shove off from West Vancouver's Ambleside Park and traverse the inlet under police and harbour patrol escort to the tanker port at North Burnaby.

The boats carried copies of a declaration that would later be signed by chiefs from the two nations, affirming their opposition to both increased industry on Burrard Inlet and to increased tanker traffic on the south coast B.C. waters known collectively as the Salish Sea.

"It is a desire of Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh to work cooperatively in a mutually supportive manner to stop Kinder Morgan's proposal to expand the Trans Mountain pipeline which terminates at the Burrard Inlet and to stop increased oil tanker traffic in the Salish Sea," the declaration read in part.

It's the [second anti-pipeline document](#) signed by the Tsleil-Waututh in as many months, after the nation ratified the Save the Fraser Declaration banning oil sands pipelines from First Nations lands on July 7.

Hundreds gathered at North Vancouver's Cates Park to welcome the paddlers and witness the signing, including New Democrat MP Kennedy Stewart, in whose Burnaby-Douglas riding lies the tanker port and part of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline from Edmonton.

“My constituents have told me loud and clear they’re very supportive of this [protest],” Stewart told The Outlook. “Here we have really historic rivals, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh, coming together now against the Kinder Morgan expansion and it’s quite significant.”

Stewart has applied for intervenor status at the National Energy Board’s hearings on the doubling of the Trans Mountain pipeline, a status which, if granted, would allow him to present arguments and information to the board and cross-examine fellow participants.

In the meantime, Stewart is echoing federal NDP leader Thomas Mulcair’s calls for a reversal of sorts on the pipeline debate.

“We support pipelines flowing east across Canada,” Stewart said. “This is because 85 per cent of the oil that’s used in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces is imported. So we’re saying that instead of exporting this oil sands oil to Asia, we should be making it flow east to keep our Canadian refineries alive in central and Atlantic Canada.

“West Coast pipelines are highly questionable,” he added.

If Kinder Morgan’s Trans Mountain twinning project is approved, it would increase the flow of oil from 300,000 barrels per day to 750,000 by 2017, and increase the size and number of tankers plying the waters of the Burrard Inlet and coastal B.C.

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