

CANADIAN OIL SANDS

Canada is one of my favorite countries. In several important ways, it has done things right that my own country, the US, has done wrong. Back during the Vietnam war Canada became an asylum for draft resisters, knowing that it was illegitimate and deadly aggression in which no one should be forced to participate. I might be a Canadian today if I had needed that option in 1968.

Canada has the kind of health care system that we should have in the US.

And, Canada has vast natural beauty that, for the most part, has been preserved and protected more thoroughly than many parts of the US. As it became ever more obvious that care for the environment is a vital priority for the entire Earth, I hoped that Canada would be a shining example on that issue, too.

I like Canadians in general, and I consider one of them a long-time good friend. I don't wish to offend any of them. But I think it is fair and responsible to point out problems in Canada, or anywhere, that affect our global environment and climate. When Jane Fonda did so recently, some Canadians resented it. Perhaps her tone was a little harsh, but I know she feels deeply concerned about the environment, and about peace, and is more than willing to speak up when there is a need.

The issue is not so much the marring of the appearance of the areas where oil is extracted, but the long-term effects that do not go away when they are covered up and new vegetation is planted.

The oil sands in northern Alberta are the fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

<http://www.pembina.org/oil-sands>

“The oilsands underlie approximately 140,000 square kilometres of the boreal forest in northern Alberta. Increasing greenhouse gas emissions are a major concern, but other impacts — from drawing down water levels in the Athabasca River, to the creation of toxic tailings dumps, to hundreds of square kilometers of strip-mining and drilling in the boreal forest — are growing just as rapidly.”

No, oilsands intensity is NOT improving; but Alberta’s Climate Leadership Plan can help

<http://www.pembina.org/blog/no-oilsands-intensity-not-improving>

“This new incentive for the oilsands sector to improve is good news, as despite past claims to the contrary, [there was no improvement in overall oilsands emissions intensity between 2004 and 2014](#). In fact, the sector increased the overall amount of GHGs produced per barrel by 25 per cent over the last decade (figure 1). In other words, emissions from the sector on a whole have grown faster

than oilsands production over the previous 10 years, the opposite trajectory that we should be on.”

Environmental Impacts of Oil Sands Development in Alberta

<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2009-09-22/environmental-impacts-oil-sands-development-alberta/>

“Oil sands development is carbon-intensive. The production and upgrading required to produce synthetic crude oil from oil sands mining results in greenhouse gas emissions in the range of 62 to 164 kilograms of CO2 equivalent per barrel. In situ development, which is generally more carbon-intensive than mining, results in emission rates between 99 and 176 kilograms of CO2 equivalent per barrel. Although there is a high degree of variation, industry average emissions for oil sands production and upgrading are estimated to be 3.2 to 4.5 times as intensive per barrel as conventional crude produced in North America.”

“While Canada was one of the 39 industrialized countries that signed on to the Kyoto Protocol in 2002 to reduce its national greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels,¹⁴ it has since backed down from these obligations. Canada has earned the reputation of being obstructionist to international climate change negotiations as we approach the Copenhagen summit.”

How Much Will Tar Sands Oil Add to Global Warming?

To constrain climate change, such unconventional oil use needs to be stopped, according to scientists

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/tar-sands-and-keystone-xl-pipeline-impact-on-global-warming/>

Oil Sands Raise Levels of Cancer-Causing Compounds in Regional Waters

From carcinogens to acid rain, tar sands development is raising levels of industrial pollution across the north

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/oil-sands-raise-levels-of-carcinogens-in-regional-waters/>

Some of the pollution from the oil sands is of concern only to Canadians, and though I wouldn't wish it on people anywhere, it's by their choice. The CO2 emissions affect the entire world, and are indeed the business of everyone.

That is why concerned Americans worked to stop the Keystone Pipeline, and most of why recently, we stopped the Dakota one.

The disastrous Trump regime may reverse our victories, and it is painful to hear Canadians being in favor of that.

Canada is still our kinder, gentler neighbor in most respects. It's understandable that they wanted to boost their economy and provide more jobs. I only wish they had chosen a better way. If the investment made in oil productions had been in solar cell or wind turbine factories, for example, they would have a welcome and beneficial export.

We in the US have plenty of dirty and dangerous exploiters of fossil fuels to contend with, and even more ignorant and reckless politicians who willingly ignore the danger. It is not an easy struggle anywhere to oppose wealthy and powerful profit-seekers out of concern for the future of a world that can sustain human life and civilization.

We do not point our fingers at the mistakes of others without freely admitting we have our own offenses to correct. But the problem is bigger than any nation, and we all need to think beyond our borders and help one another to solve it.

--cosmic rat Feb. 6 2017