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THE FORD GOVERNMENT

CLIMATE CRIME # 29

Enbridge's Line 5: Mixing freshwater and gas

The Ford government, along with the federal government, actively supports the continuing use of Enbridge's Line 5 from Superior, Wisconsin to Sarnia, Ontario via the pipeline that runs under the waters of the Straits of Mackinac.

Claim

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer ordered Enbridge to shut down the Line 5 pipeline on May 12, 2021, due to the threat it poses to the Great Lakes, specifically to the Straits of Mackinac. A legal battle has now begun with a state order for the pipeline closure sent to Enbridge.

Ford, the Trudeau government and Enbridge itself all insist that the underwater pipeline is safe, that there are sufficient safeguards in place to prevent accidents from damaging the pipeline, and that a planned replacement tunnel (due to be finished in 2030) will also be safe. They cite economic concerns and energy security as reasons to petition the court to stall the shutdown of the pipeline.

The reality is that Line 5 has leaked at least 33 times since its 1953 opening, spilling a total of 4.5 million litres of oil into the environment. A devastating spill of 3.79 million litres of diluted tar sands oil into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan in 2010 has yet to be completely cleaned up. A spill into the

Great Lakes, which hold 20 per cent of the world's surface freshwater, would be destructive to Indigenous and settler communities, and to waters, animals and sea life as well as surrounding lands throughout the watershed.¹

Counter Claim

Enbridge's operation of Line 5 in the Straits presents a substantial, inherent, and unreasonable risk of an oil spill. A spill would have grave ecological and economic consequences, severely impairing public rights in the Great Lakes and their public trust resources. Michigan locals are urging that the aging pipeline be closed down citing fear it could imperil drinking water for tens of millions of people.

Whitmer has called the pipeline a "ticking time bomb", while former International Joint Commission chair Lana Pollack warned Canada's opposition to the



¹ Toronto Star, 2021-05-10

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/05/10/enbridges-claims-about-a-line-5-shutdown-need-to-be-challenged.html>



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closure “flies in the face of science,” in a recent Toronto Star op ed.² “The danger of a breach of this age-compromised pipeline spanning a major shipping lane in the world’s largest freshwater body increases with every passing day.” And it is only a matter of time before that happens.

Indigenous Claim

All 12 federally recognized Native American tribes in Michigan oppose a pipeline that crosses waters that feature prominently in Anishinaabe creation stories. Anishinabek Nation, which represents 39 First Nations communities in Ontario, is also calling for the shutdown of the pipeline.

Anishinabek Grand Council Chief Glen Hare stated, “We continue to work in solidarity with our relatives on the other side of the Medicine Line who are working relentlessly to protect our Great Lakes.” Hare expressed disappointment with the federal government’s opposition to the closure of Line 5 in

Michigan, noting that this ignores the long-standing cross-border commitment to protect the Great Lakes via The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

In recent months a team of citizen scientists revealed³ that in 2020 Enbridge had ignored 10,000-year-old artifacts in its haste to conclude a survey that the company hopes will secure approval for a protective tunnel to protect the pipeline from further damage.

A “People and Climate First” Response

- ! Acknowledge and affirm the understanding in UNDRIP article 25, regarding the Indigenous right to safeguard and maintain their relationship with the waters within their lands;**
- ! Support the Indigenous campaign to halt the planning and building of a tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac and the de-commissioning of the Enbridge pipelines under the Straits.**

Sources:

The Energy Mix:

<https://www.theenergymix.com/2021/09/19/michigans-line-5-pipeline-could-wreak-us41b-in-climate-damage/>

The Energy Mix:

<https://www.theenergymix.com/2021/05/12/campaigners-plan-eviction-events-ottawa-backs-enbridge-as-line-5-closure-deadline-arrives/>

The Wall Street Journal: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/michigan-group-says-archaeological-findings-enough-to-halt-enbridge-tunnel-project-11603372004>

Muskrat magazine “Defenders of the Land”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOc5-YrRkil>

The Indigenous Environmental Network

MackinawOde (Heart of the Turtle), an Indigenous-led water protection group

The Great Lakes Water Protector Group

Oil & Water Don’t Mix

² The Energy Mix: <https://www.theenergymix.com/2021/03/24/canadas-opposition-to-line-5-closure-flies-in-the-face-of-science-courts-disaster-ex-ijc-chair-warns/>

³ <https://www.theenergymix.com/2020/10/26/cultural-assessment-for-line-5-pipeline-tunnel-ignored-10000-year-old-artifacts-technician-says/>