

Women Speaking Out About Energy East



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Background

TransCanada announced, in August 2013, its intention to proceed with Energy East, a bitumen-carrying pipeline that would bring tar sands oil from Alberta through Ottawa on its way to the east coast for export. The Nobel Women's Initiative and Ecology Ottawa jointly organized a series of events to engage Ottawa residents – particularly women – in discussion about the pipeline and its impact on the Ottawa region. The events were part of Ecology Ottawa's #TarFree613 campaign and incorporated knowledge gained from Breaking Ground, the Nobel Women's Initiative fact finding mission to Alberta's tar sands and along the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline route in British Columbia.

Key to these events was a roundtable discussion, hosted by Ecology Ottawa and Nobel Women's Initiative on October 30 2013, that brought together women eager to voice their opinions about Energy East. Nobel Laureate Jody Williams joined this discussion, bringing with her the stories of over 200 women activists living in communities impacted by tar sands development in Alberta and British Columbia. The message heard during the roundtable discussion was clear – Ottawa women are opposed to Energy East and the impacts it

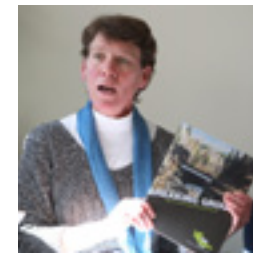
will have on the Ottawa region and, more broadly, on climate change. Women are raising their voices against the pipeline and tar sands expansion, organizing in opposition of the proposal, and demanding that their local representatives do the same.

In Canada and around the world, women are leaders in the struggle for environmental justice and sustainability. They are on the frontlines, working tirelessly to ensure a clean future, uniting to defend their environment and wellbeing of their communities. Energy East has brought the frontline for the struggle against tar sands expansion to the nation's capital – and women are rising to the challenge.



Photo credit: Greg Gorman

Jody Williams is the chair of the Nobel Women's Initiative, an organization created by six women Nobel Peace laureates. She won the prize in 1997 for her work to ban landmines through the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.



What are women concerned about?

- **Pipeline safety**

Many women are concerned about the general safety of the existing pipeline, particularly its structural soundness and ability to carry bitumen safely without spilling. Residents lack trust in TransCanada's capacity to respond to a spill and are not confident in TransCanada's commitment to pipeline safety.

- **Cost and supply of natural gas**

The women expressed concern about the impacts Energy East will have on the cost and supply of natural gas to the region. Natural gas suppliers share these concerns, leaving residents worried that the conversion of a natural gas pipeline to a bitumen pipeline could result in shortages of natural gas, particularly during peak times.

- **Pipelines' contributions to climate change**

Williams clarified that the goal at hand reaches beyond stopping Energy East, to the larger goal of stopping tar sands expansion and slowing climate change.

All women expressed concern with the immediate pipeline but also with the risks other pipelines pose to climate change on a global scale. They also recognize pipelines as an essential factor in expanding the tar sands and subsequently growing the industry.

- **Federal review processes**

The women expressed a lack of trust in pipeline proposal reviews conducted at the federal level, particularly by the National Energy Board (NEB), since all decisions are ultimately approved or denied by the Prime Minister. Residents are also frustrated with the NEB criteria that must be met in order to file a complaint against a pipeline proposal, stating that the criteria are too limited and, therefore, effectively eliminate many voices from the conversation. However, the women acknowledged that the NEB is a critical actor in the Energy East proposal and that their engagement with the NEB will be essential.



- **Government and Industry marketing campaigns**
Ottawa women are very concerned with TransCanada's marketing campaigns – which appear on billboards, buses, in newspapers, magazines and on social media – that heavily promote Energy East to Ottawa residents. They note that these campaigns often contain false information with respect to employment opportunities and energy security. The women are worried over the lack of counter-information that provides a more truthful narrative to Ottawa residents.
- **Contamination of local water supply**
Discussions revealed that Ottawa women are concerned about the impacts a pipeline spill would have on their water supply. Given that the Energy East pipeline will run under the Rideau River

– Ottawa residents' water supply – a spill would effectively contaminate the area's drinkable water. The residents expressed further concern over the negative impact a spill would have on the wildlife and flora inhabiting the Rideau River and expressed great interest in protecting species against this contamination.

- **Contamination of UNESCO World Heritage Site**
The Rideau Canal was deemed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007. A pipeline spill would contaminate the Rideau River, which flows in to the Rideau Canal – one of Ottawa's most important historical structures. Ottawa women expressed great concern over ensuring that this significant landmark remain protected against contaminated waters.



Key Messages & Recommendations

Out of the Energy East pipeline discussions, the women of Ottawa identified the following as items requiring urgent attention and action:



- **Municipal government must show leadership**
The women of Ottawa call on City Councilors and other municipal representatives to engage with Ottawa residents and learn their views on the Energy East Pipeline. Municipal government must develop an energy strategy for the Ottawa area that accurately reflects constituents' views. The women urge municipal governments to actively seek information about Energy East from sources outside of those sponsored by the government or industry.
- **TransCanada must implement an inclusive, open and transparent consultation process**
Ottawa women urge TransCanada to hear the concerns of all Ottawa Residents – regardless of where they live in relation to the proposed Energy East pipeline route – in an open and transparent consultation process. TransCanada must then decide on the construction of Energy East based on the views of Ottawa residents.

Find out more:

Nobel Women's Initiative - Breaking Ground: Women, Oil and Climate Change in Alberta and British Columbia: bit.ly/nwireport

Ecology Ottawa - Tar Free 613 campaign: tarfree613.ca