

Via email

March 13, 2019

Premier John Horgan
PO BOX 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Horgan,

Re: Urging support for the *Oil Tanker Moratorium Act*

We write to seek BC's commitment to take a position in support of the federal Bill C-48, the *Oil Tanker Moratorium Act*, which is a key tool to protect the BC coast from spills of crude and persistent oil.

We appreciate your commitment that "Our government will continue to stand up for the right to protect B.C.'s environment, economy and coast," and we agree with Minister George Heyman's position in this regard: "A single spill of diluted bitumen would put at risk tens of thousands of jobs across B.C. We have a responsibility to ensure that every measure to reduce risks is in place..."¹ Bill C-48 is an important measure to reduce risks of diluted bitumen spills in BC, and we urge the BC government to act on its responsibility by supporting the Bill at this critical juncture.

Bill C-48 would protect BC's coast

Bill C-48 would formalize a longstanding position of federal Liberal governments to keep Hecate Strait, Queen Charlotte Sound and Dixon Entrance (the "north coast") free from crude oil tankers. The Bill would prohibit oil tankers carrying more than 12,500 metric tonnes of crude or persistent oil from docking, loading or unloading at ports or marine installations in the north coast. This would effectively prevent future crude oil megaprojects in the north coast similar to the now-rejected Enbridge Northern Gateway diluted bitumen pipeline and tankers proposal. The Bill would not apply to natural gas or "non-persistent" oils (e.g. refined products such as gasoline), and it would not impact community fuel shipments.

Bill C-48 is a unique opportunity to proactively protect BC's north coast from the risk of oil spills, in recognition of the region's particularly dangerous waters, highly challenging oil spill response conditions, unique and globally-important ecology, and ocean-based economies that

¹ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0019-000742>

rely on healthy marine waters. Moreover, it recognizes the extensive support of British Columbians over many years to entrench a north coast oil tanker prohibition in law (see enclosed backgrounder).

Bill C-48 is at risk in the Senate

Bill C-48 passed the House of Commons in May 2018, however it has since been held up in the Senate, and there is a real risk that it may not pass. Senators are under increasingly intense pressure to stall or reject the Bill from its opponents such as the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, which recently testified to the Senate Transport Committee. The Government of Alberta made submissions opposing Bill C-48 before the House of Commons Committee, and is likely to do so again before the Senate. Our understanding is that some independent Senators are hesitant to support the Bill in this context, and as a result the Senate is looking to hear directly from British Columbians on the matter.

Consequently, the Senate Transport Committee reviewing Bill C-48 will (pending budget approval from the Senate) be holding public hearings on the Bill in Prince Rupert and Terrace on April 16-17, 2019. The Committee will also accept written submissions on the Bill and hold additional hearings in Ottawa.

The importance of support for Bill C-48 from BC

A strong showing of support for Bill C-48 in submissions received by the Senate Committee during March and April 2019 will likely be critical in determining whether Bill C-48 passes into law. In this context, we urge the BC government to uphold its commitment to protecting BC's coast from oil spills by making a submission to the Senate Committee supporting Bill C-48.

A statement of support from BC would send an important signal to undecided Senators that BC's government recognizes the value of Bill C-48, as well as the strong support of British Columbians that led to the Bill's introduction. We believe this would contribute significantly to advancing the Bill through the Senate process. In contrast, if BC were to remain neutral on Bill C-48, this would undoubtedly add an obstacle to passage of the Bill, given that BC is the only province to which the Bill directly applies. Furthermore, a neutral position on Bill C-48 would be inconsistent with your government's commitment in the Confidence and Supply Agreement to "employ every tool available" to stop "the transportation of raw bitumen through our province."²

We look forward to your response to our request that BC go on the record before the Senate Transport Committee in support of Bill C-48. We note that, while the Senate Transport

² http://bcndpcaucus.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/BC-Green-BC-NDP-Agreement_vf-May-29th-2017.pdf

Committee has not finalized its schedule in this matter, it is likely to stop accepting submissions on Bill C-48 by approximately the end of April, 2019. Your office is welcome to contact Des Nobels, chair of Friends of Wild Salmon (dnobels@citytel.net), to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Douglas Channel Watch

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Encl.:

Backgrounder: Support for Bill C-48, the *Oil Tanker Moratorium Act*