



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

---

1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 150 • NUMBER 307

---

## **OIL TANKER MORATORIUM BILL**

MESSAGE FROM COMMONS—  
MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN  
COMMONS AMENDMENTS ADOPTED

Speech by:

The Honourable Bev Busson

Thursday, June 20, 2019

## THE SENATE

Thursday, June 20, 2019

### OIL TANKER MORATORIUM BILL

#### MESSAGE FROM COMMONS— MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN COMMONS AMENDMENTS ADOPTED

**Hon. Bev Busson:** Honourable senators, I wasn't going to speak on this bill because I have a bit of a raspy throat. I feel compelled to speak after listening to my colleagues today speaking so passionately on the bill.

I feel very strongly about this bill because, of course, I'm from British Columbia. It affects the ecology of British Columbia, the energy sectors of Alberta and Saskatchewan and our economy altogether. More importantly, it affects the very fabric of our country.

Since this bill made it to the Order Paper, we have witnessed one group after the other, through their testimony, emails and social media, passionately plead their cases and champion their causes on each side.

Those who favour Bill C-48 advocate that the only way to protect the coastline of British Columbia is to solidify the voluntary tanker ban on the West Coast into binding federal legislation. This would forever banish tankers from transporting oil from Alberta and Saskatchewan through northern British Columbia ports and, therefore, make Asian markets a more difficult destination.

I understand that the vast majority of supporters of this bill are motivated by their love of British Columbia and their fear for that environment. They not only wish to protect the vast shoreline and pristine beaches, but also the mountains and unspoiled rainforests. British Columbia and its waters are inhabited by the rarest species left on the planet. The people who live along the coast, who are predominantly Indigenous, follow a lifestyle predicated on the legacy of habitation that has been rooted there for thousands of years.

Many demand that we protect the environment for future generations. This genuine concern has been expressed by some as a need for a total prohibition of tankers. Conversely, there are those who remind us that this great country was built upon exploration, retrieval and transportation of natural resources to markets around the world.

The petroleum industry is one of the major contributors to the entire Canadian economy, not just the economies of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Does it come down to choosing one interest over the other, pitting one region against another and one First Nation against another?

I'll come back to this.

I have called British Columbia home for over 40 years. I've lived on the coast, I've lived in the interior and I have spent a lot of time in the northern regions of British Columbia. I have fished on the Skeena River and its tributaries. I visited Haida Gwaii. I've even seen a Kermode, or spirit bear, in the wild — yes, I really have — and also a number of grizzlies, though more up close than I would have liked, I have to admit.

I'm certainly not constantly saying that I am an expert on British Columbia's ecosystem, but it gives me a personal perspective. To say that I think British Columbia is a very special place is a vast understatement.

Interestingly enough, I grew up in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. I spent my high school summers at places like Lawrencetown Beach and Clam Harbour Beach. I have travelled the Cabot Trail on the coast of Cape Breton with my parents, and later with my own family and my friends. I've spent time in P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador. I have experienced the majesty of the East Coast, which is every bit as beautiful and precious as the West Coast.

Thus, a conundrum: Why the focus on the West Coast? If tanker traffic is safe for the east and for the St. Lawrence, why is it to be forbidden on the West Coast? I'm not really sure.

Another complication not often discussed in the pipeline tanker conversation is the transportation of oil by rail. The longer we avoid ports and building pipelines to accommodate oil, the more oil is going to be transported by rail. Research shows that rail is, by far, the most dangerous way for oil to be moved from one place to another. We will never forget the hellish nightmare of the Lac-Mégantic catastrophe. A train derailment into one of the rushing rivers that has been the lifeblood of the West would be an unspeakable tragedy as well for the environment — one, I submit, that would be at least as devastating as an unmitigated spill at sea.

There was such a derailment last year in the Rogers Pass that saw 40 railcars go off the rails. Imagine if they had been loaded with oil instead of grain. Where I live in B.C., there's been a doubling of oil by rail on the mainland of the CPR that travels west through the Rocky Mountains on its way to the coast. These trains cling to the cliffs and banks of the Thompson and the great Fraser River down through the major spawning waterways where many kinds of salmon, including our famous sockeye, sturgeon and other fish species have habitats.

In committee, I asked one of the witness experts who was testifying about how oil spills are dealt with in the ocean. I asked, "What plan is there if an oil tanker ever went into one of the fast-moving rivers like the Fraser?" He said there was no plan and no possibility of mitigating the damage of a large oil spill in swift water. This spill would not only destroy the fish habitat and spawning grounds but would ultimately end up in the same ocean we are all trying so hard to protect. Perhaps getting oil into pipelines and not out of them should be our goal.

This is not just a debate about pipelines and oil tankers on the West Coast. It's a debate about our ability to work together for the greater good, to find the tie that binds the common ground that makes us all Canadians, not to create a wedge that separates us into regional agendas.

Canadians enjoy a lifestyle that is second to none in the world. This country has afforded us First World benefits, like universal health care, modern infrastructure and so much more, supported by tax revenues, much of which are funded by the resource sector.

As previously stated, the energy sector accounts for approximately 10 per cent of Canada's economy and hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Although we are all striving to reduce our carbon footprint, the petroleum industry is currently an integral part of our lives and is not about to become obsolete tomorrow.

I was fortunate enough to be part of the Senate road crew that travelled west to hear witnesses talk about Bill C-48, each with impassioned pleas for each of their sides, both of whom wanted it to be their way.

As you know, we've heard from witnesses with compelling and valid arguments. Unfortunately, the government has rejected the amendment that we had put in the balance. This is not a moratorium. This is a tanker ban. It's not just a tanker ban on tankers; it's a tanker ban on prosperity for the people of the Nisga'a and others, who are praying for the kind of opportunity that the rest of us enjoy.

I'd like to remind you that we already have a tanker moratorium on the West Coast and hopefully Bill C-69 to protect us from the hazards of an oil spill. I will be voting no to this message. Thank you.

---