

Ensuring the Viability of the Oil and Gas Sector a Priority for Canada's Chambers of Commerce

For Immediate Release

Ottawa, Sept. 22, 2016— Chambers of commerce across Canada showed resounding support for the federal government to provide the equitable consultation and regulatory certainty needed to develop the critical trade infrastructure all Canadians will depend on to prosper and compete in the 21st Century.

During the 2016 Canadian Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting held September 18-19 in Regina, Saskatchewan, the consensus view of business leaders from all regions was that the continued viability of Canada's oil and gas sector is a priority to enable all Canadians long-term prosperity. That viability hinges on the National Energy Board's capability to consult stakeholders, and to make expert and timely recommendations to the federal government for approving or rejecting proposed projects.

The process for consultation through the National Energy Board has come under deep criticism from various interest groups, and restoring confidence in the process has been identified as a top priority for the federal government. While the government has committed to consulting broadly with Canadians on a wide variety of issues, the business community is concerned that the pace and depth of some of these consultations will not result in the kind of meaningful and focused dialogue that can truly inform and influence government decisions.

Lack of clarity and imbalance in the federal government's approach to consultation are glaringly reflected in its hurried approach to formalize a tanker moratorium of Canada's northwest coast. If passed, the moratorium would effectively stop tanker traffic and oil exports north of the Port of Vancouver. A recent post on the Transport Canada website indicates the moratorium *will be* finalized shortly and consultation on the ban is limited to just six weeks and closes September 30, 2016.

If imposed, the moratorium could dramatically impact future economic development in the region and indeed, Canada.

Natural Resources Canada estimates Canada's energy sector contributed 7.2% to the national GDP in 2015 and directly and indirectly accounted for 1.75 million jobs across the country. Approximately 33% of all 2015 non-residential capital investment in Canada came from the oil and gas energy sector. This economic activity contributes to government tax revenues which support social programs and federal transfer payments. Continued contributions of oil and gas to Canadians' standards of living depends on building the infrastructure needed to transport our products to markets which pay top dollar for them.

Canada's business community is deeply disturbed that, unlike the review of energy infrastructure projects through the National Energy Board, there has been no expert and transparent analysis of the potential economic or social impacts such a moratorium could mean for Canada – yet Canada's coastline belongs to all Canadians.

Even more disturbing, is that stakeholders have not been given a meaningful and inclusive opportunity to express their views on whether a moratorium *should* be finalized. In fact, there has been no formal consultation on this important issue that affects all Canadians.

Comments:

Canadian Chamber of Commerce

“Ottawa should take the time to consult with all Canadians, including the business community, on how a tanker ban will affect the national economy. Rushing this consultation through in under six weeks falls far short of the government's promises to listen to Canadians.”

- Hon. Perrin Beatty, President and CEO

Alberta Chambers of Commerce

“The Alberta Chamber of Commerce respects the rights and views of First Nations and other local communities who live along the northwest coast of British Columbia. But equally, our opinions on this national matter should be heard. Our ability to get our products to market relies on an integrated and open transportation network, and that includes a coastline that belongs to all Canadians. We are asking to have our voice heard – it is our coastline too.”

- Ken Kobly, President and CEO

Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce

“The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the need for the Federal Government to take the time to consult with all Canadians. While this particular ban impacts the west coast, we fear that one day, there will be a push to ban oil tankers off the east coast. There must be an expert and transparent analysis conducted of the potential economic or social impacts such a moratorium could mean for Canada.”

- David Duplisea, Chief Executive Officer

BC Chamber of Commerce

“The British Columbia Chamber agrees that ensuring our coastline remains safe is a top priority. However, banning oil tankers is not the answer considering there are several hundred vessels of all types, not to mention numerous U.S. oil tankers that will still be passing close to our vital waterways, that traverse our northwest coast every year carrying hazardous products. Projects, such as Northern Gateway, will bring in further emergency response capability and safety navigational aids to our coastline. That is how we protect our coast.”

- Val Litwin, President and CEO

The federal government has very publicly staked a claim on ensuring its consultation on national issues will be inclusive to all Canadians. Upholding this commitment is critical – the consequences of inequitable stakeholder consultations and an uncertain regulatory framework undermine Canada’s ability to develop infrastructure to ensure our oil and gas resources get to markets.

Adding more clarity and consistency in how we make decisions of national scope would improve our international competitiveness as well as quality of life for all Canadians.

“Rushed consultations aren’t just bad for business – they also work against the interests of Indigenous communities and all Canadians,” says Mr. Beatty. “The federal government must respect our citizens’ right to a fair hearing. Canadians should insist on an inclusive and transparent process for reviewing a moratorium’s impacts before a decision is made.”

Canadians can submit their views on the moratorium [here](#).

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The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is the vital connection between business and the federal government. It helps shape public policy and decision-making to the benefit of businesses, communities and families across Canada with a network of over 450 chambers of commerce and boards of trade, representing 200,000 businesses of all sizes in all sectors of the economy and in all regions. News and information are available at Chamber.ca or follow us on Twitter @CdnChamberofCom

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