

Kinder Morgan Pipeline Expansion

February 2017

The Trans Mountain pipeline, owned by Kinder Morgan Canada, is a pipeline system that has been in operation since 1953, providing the “only West Coast access for Canadian oil products”.¹

Background

There continues to be considerable controversy across Canada, and specifically in B.C., around the decision to expand the Trans Mountain pipeline. In 2013, Kinder Morgan put forward an application to the Canadian National Energy Board (NEB) to expand the Trans Mountain pipeline. This expansion would nearly triple the transport of diluted bitumen, from 300,000 barrels of oil per day to 890,000 barrels of oil per day, between Edmonton, Alberta to the marine terminal in Burnaby, B.C.² In May 2016, the NEB put forward 157 conditions that Kinder Morgan must meet in order to construct and operate the pipeline.

In late 2016, the federal government announced their approval of the \$6.8 billion project expansion, stating that approval was subject to Kinder Morgan meeting the [157 conditions](#) set out by the NEB. While the Trans Mountain has the legal authority to move forward, the company must continue to submit on-going documentation and filings to demonstrate they have met each condition.³ In January 2017, B.C.'s Premier announced that the province would support this expansion, after determining that the project met the government's five conditions for approval including: successful completion of the environmental review process, world-leading marine and land oil spill response, protection and recovery measures to mitigate risk and costs associated with heavy oil spills and shipments, consultation and participation among First Nations, and fiscal and economic benefits that reflect the level, degree and nature of risk borne by the province.⁴

The expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline continue to be strongly opposed by health advocates, First Nations, local governments and environmentalists. Many issues raised by these groups centre around the high levels of uncertainty and risk associated with potential oil spills. Since 1953, there have been [82 reported spills](#) from the Trans Mountain pipeline. Health advocates have argued against the expansion, with concerns around the potential exposure to chemicals found in crude oil and bitumen in the event of a spill, which are known carcinogens.⁵ Many vulnerable groups such as children, older adults, and women of childbearing age are at even greater risk. The under-estimation of health impacts in the Trans Mountain proposal continues to be of great concern. Many nurses have noted that any project that poses a significant threat to the health of British Columbians warrants more rigorous research and risk assessment prior to acceptance and approval.

1 *TransMountain. (2016). [About Us](#).*

2 *TransMountain. (2016). [Expansion Project](#).*

3 *Government of Canada National Energy Board. (2017). [Trans Mountain Pipeline ULC-Trans Mountain Expansion](#).*

4 *BC Government News: [British Columbia outlines requirements for heavy oil pipeline consideration](#).*

5 *Takaro, T., Brubacher, A., Lubik, A., Nicol, A.M, Wang, L., & Khakh, A. (2015). [Major Human Health Impacts of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion: A Report for BROKE and NOPE](#).*



Issues Brief

There are significant environmental risks to marine life, water contamination, and environmental degradation, which all have downstream impacts on health. Further, in the event of a spill, impacts on the environment can last for decades. Many First Nations have also been strongly opposed to the expansion, with concerns around the lack of proper consultation and participation in the review and planning process, and the impact of spills on marine life and drinking water.⁶ Failure to engage in proper consultation with First Nations will continue to create barriers in moving towards reconciliation, and genuine consultation and participation must be respected in any environmental project.

Key Messages:

- The federal and B.C. governments have approved the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline.
- Many health advocates, First Nations, environmentalists and local governments continue to oppose the expansion due to serious environmental and health risks.
- First Nations must be properly consulted and involved in the reviewing and planning of any pipeline expansion, in order to ensure movement towards reconciliation and healing.
- Nursing expertise recognizes that the environmental health impacts of the pipeline expansion must not be underestimated, and greater risk assessment must be a priority in order to protect public health.

Questions for Nurses

1. What specific concerns do you have in relation to the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline?
2. What advocacy initiatives would you like ARNBC to advance?
3. What other nursing perspectives around the pipeline expansion have not been addressed?

Further Reading

- National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. (2014). [Health effects of oil spills and implication for public health planning and research.](#)

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⁶ *Globe and Mail: B.C. First Nations unite in fight against Trans Mountain pipeline.*

