

# **Canada's Forgotten Coast**

## **Why Atlantic Canada Is The Big Risk From Tar Sands Expansion and Supertankers**

A tremendous amount of attention has been paid to the risks of a new oil pipeline sending hundreds of oil tankers along the north coast of British Columbia, something our prime minister has promised to prevent. However, on the other side of Canada, home to the endangered North Atlantic Right whale and the hugely productive lobster fishery, the Atlantic coast is facing the same pipeline and tanker risks.

The proposed Energy East pipeline would mean nearly 330 million barrels per year of diluted bitumen traveling through Atlantic Canada and the Bay of Fundy down to the US Gulf Coast. As a new report released today by New York City, N.Y. -based Natural Resources Defense Council shows, the diluted tar sands would be loaded aboard up to 300 supertankers, representing a 300 per cent increase in crude tanker traffic in the Bay of Fundy. These low-maneuverability supertankers (they require nearly 10 nautical miles to come to a full stop) would float on the highest tides in the world, traveling through narrow shipping passages 12 months of the year.

It's no wonder fishermen are worried. More than 5,000 thousand work in the thriving Bay of Fundy fisheries in New Brunswick. Thousands more fishers work along the Nova Scotia side of the Bay of Fundy and through the Gulf of Maine. Whale-watching and other tourism businesses are at direct risk. The people who work in these core industries, along with the families and other businesses that rely on them, are beginning to understand what's at stake.

We've been traveling along the Bay of Fundy coast, hearing from Nova Scotians and New Brunswickers. They tell us they have a lot to lose. They want their grandchildren to be able to do what they do. To fish. To provide whale watching tours. To keep their restaurants running. To make their living on the Bay of Fundy, which produces more than \$750 million in value each year through the fisheries alone, according to the Bay of Fundy Inshore Fishermen's Association.

Local concerns are real and growing, but in Atlantic Canada the question is— who's listening? Nova Scotians' voices won't be heard by the National Energy Board, the government organization charged with determining whether or not the Energy East pipeline is in the public interest, unless they are willing to make the

hours-long trip Saint John or Fredericton in the middle of the workweek. Though the tanker route cuts very close to Nova Scotia, there are currently no planned public panel sessions or government consultations by the NEB. Prime Minister Trudeau has said pipelines do not belong in the Great Bear Rainforest or the North Coast of British Columbia because of the sensitive ecosystems, but when it comes to the risks of a tar sands pipeline to the Atlantic coast, he and his government has remained silent.

The inconvenient truth is that both of Canada's coasts are at great risk from oil spills from proposed tar sands pipelines. However, the NEB has refused to consider a well-regarded study by the National Academy of Science (NAS), which shows bitumen in tar sands oil sinks, making it all but impossible to clean up. Today marks the six-year anniversary of the Kalamazoo, Michigan spill, where one million gallons of tar sands dilbit crude spilled into the river after a rupture in the Enbridge pipeline.

Bitumen will sink in the Pacific just as it will sink in the Atlantic as it sunk and stayed in the Kalamazoo. Most tankers today carry refined products or other liquids, not bitumen, which would be a new substance for our waters. Because of where refineries on the Atlantic seaboard are located, including Saint John, right now a large portion of the Atlantic coast is relatively tanker free. We need to keep it that way.

On the East Coast, we talk a lot about investing in Atlantic Canadian businesses and industries, so that we can support our local economies. This pipeline and tanker project will not create a single job in Nova Scotia and just over 100 longterm jobs in New Brunswick. Instead, many thousands of fishing and tourism jobs at risk of being wiped out by oil spills, while Nova Scotia, for one, has already created 1,300 jobs in energy efficiency and more than one thousand jobs in clean energy. It's just the start.

The people who live along the Bay of Fundy are proud of their traditions and connections to the land and water. The Energy East pipeline not only threatens who we are, but who we are trying to become.

*Matt Abbott is the Fundy Baykeeper with the Conservation Council of New Brunswick and authored a 2015 [report](#) on the risks to the Bay of Fundy from the Energy East export project.*

*Stephen Thomas is the Energy Campaign Coordinator or the Ecology Action Centre, and is a registered Intervenor to the National Energy Board's review process of the proposed Energy East Pipeline. The Ecology Action Centre, and allied groups, have started the [www.savefundy.ca](http://www.savefundy.ca) campaign related to their concerns.*