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Published By: NEWS COMMUNICATIONS since 1977

Wednesday November 23rd, 2016

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AHEAD OF TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE RULING, CANADA SAYS IT WANTS ASIA EXPORTS

Liberal government set to decide fate of Kinder Morgan's route to the Pacific

Canada's natural resources minister said on Tuesday it was important that Canadian oil exports reach Asia, as the Liberal government prepares to decide whether to approve Kinder Morgan Inc's plans to more than double the capacity of a pipeline to the Pacific.

Ottawa must decide by Dec. 19 on the company's proposal to build a second pipeline adjacent to the existing Trans Mountain line from the Alberta oil sands to the west coast, where the oil could be loaded on tankers and shipped to lucrative Asian refining markets.

Environmentalists and aboriginal activists strongly oppose the project and have reacted angrily to what they have said were indications the Liberals would approve it. Oil companies seeking relief from

transport bottlenecks could be helped if U.S. President-elect Donald Trump fulfills a promise to give a permit for TransCanada Corp's Keystone XL pipeline from Alberta to Texas. But when pressed on a possible Keystone approval, Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr told reporters: "It doesn't get oil to export markets in Asia, and it's a goal of the government of Canada to expand its export markets." Kinder Morgan Canada President Ian Anderson, asked about Carr's comments, told reporters in Kamloops, British Columbia, that they were "consistent with what producers have been saying for some time, and it's definitely the market we are trying to serve." Carr added the government's position had long been that Canada did not want to rely too much on one market. The United States takes virtually all Canada's energy exports. The Liberal government said last week it would toughen its response to oil spills at sea, a move some environmentalists saw as a clear signal Ottawa would approve the Trans Mountain expansion. The pipeline runs from Alberta to

British Columbia. The government of British Columbia has laid down five conditions which must be met before it allows pipelines to be built on its territory. One of the demands is that the federal government upgrade its ability to tackle oil spills.

HUSKY OIL SPILL IN CANADIAN RIVER CAUSED BY GROUND MOVEMENT

A Husky Energy Inc oil spill into a major Canadian river last summer that cut off drinking water supply for two cities was caused by ground movement that buckled a section of pipeline, the company said in a report to the Saskatchewan provincial government. Husky's report, which the company made public on Thursday, said the break was not due to material defects, such as corrosion. A supporting report by engineering firm Stantec said heavy rain may have triggered the ground movement. The spill happened as the Canadian government considers whether to allow oil pipeline projects proposed by Kinder Morgan Inc and TransCanada Corp. Oil pipelines are

viewed by the oil-rich provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan as critical to move crude to tidewater, but they have drawn fierce opposition from environmental and indigenous groups.

The Saskatchewan break, discovered by Husky on July 21, occurred on land about 160 metres (525 feet) from the North Saskatchewan River, and leaked an estimated 225 cubic metres (225,000 litres) of crude oil, the report said. Forty percent of the oil entered the river. Cleanup operations concluded in October accounted for 210 cubic metres.

The spill forced the cities of Prince Albert and North Battleford to temporarily find alternative sources of drinking water. The province said in September that it had recorded 148 wildlife deaths, including birds and fish. "We know the impact this incident had on communities and would like to acknowledge the extraordinary assistance we've received throughout," Husky spokesman Mel Duvall said in an email. "From the beginning we have taken full responsibility and continue to do so." Husky said it will

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review leak detection procedures and ensure ground movement risks to pipelines are monitored.

KEYSTONE XL NO LONGER CRUCIAL FOR CANADA'S OIL EXPORTS

Natural resources minister Jim Carr says Canada's plan for oil exports is 'not to solely rely on one major market'. The prospect of the Keystone XL pipeline being approved by the incoming Trump administration will have little effect on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's plans to get Canada's oil to market. Federal Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr says Canada has moved on to a whole different plan for its oil exports, and the once crucial Keystone XL pipeline has become

less of a priority."It doesn't get oil to export markets in Asia," said Carr as he left his government's cabinet meeting Tuesday."It's a goal of the government of Canada to expand its export markets."President-elect Donald Trump has promised to grant a permit to TransCanada's Keystone XL project that would carry more than 800,000 thousand barrels of oil a day from Alberta to refineries in Texas. President Barack Obama rejected the pipeline last year. Almost all of Canada's oil is currently being exported to the U.S. Pipelines that carry oil from Canada are at capacity, so a lot of it is going by rail. Canadian oil also faces a significant discount in U.S. Midwest refineries because it's heavier and more expensive to refine than light crude. Carr said his government wants to

take a new approach."I think that if you listen to what the prime minister has said about moving our resources sustainably, the importance of responding to the demands in other export markets, and not to solely rely on one major market," he said. "That is the sensible approach to take and nothing has changed."Carr's comments show that the Keystone XL project is no longer the only option or even the best option, according to Jennifer Winter, scientific director of energy and environmental policy at the University of Calgary. She thinks the priority for the Canadian government now is focusing on pipeline projects on its own soil and the markets it wants."Oil producers would prefer to have Keystone rather than no Keystone, the issue is where do Canadian producers want to send

oil?" she said in an interview."The change is the idea Asia is a much more important market, and a few years ago when [prime minister] Stephen Harper was talking about Keystone, the U.S. looked like the best market for Canadian oil," Winter said. "China is going to be a much bigger growth market and therefore substantially more attractive." Canadian oil producers seem to be taking a similar approach."The United States is our industry's largest customer, but also our largest competitor, and we will continue to advance the priorities that are important to Canadian producers," said Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers spokeswoman Chelsie Klassen in an email."Our challenge is getting that energy to the world, and the only way we

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can do that is through more energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, which will enable us to deliver oil and natural gas to more customers at home and globally." During question period in the House of Commons Tuesday, Carr said that as far as Canada is concerned, Keystone XL has been approved and is ready to go on the Canadian side of the border. If the pipeline is to be built, Carr said, the company has to reapply for permission from the U.S. government. The federal government is considering two pipeline proposals now. It has to decide by Dec. 19 the fate of the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion that would carry oil from Edmonton to Burnaby, B.C. It also has to figure out what to do about the troubled Northern Gateway pipeline project that would carry oil from Alberta to Kitimat, B.C. for export to Asia. That pipeline is in limbo after a court overturned federal approval of the project. The federal cabinet has to decide by the end of November whether to undertake more consultations with Indigenous communities or scrap the whole thing. Meanwhile, the prospect of the revival of the Keystone XL pipeline isn't a slam dunk either, according to Jeff Phillips, who specializes in international trade and U.S.-Canada relations with Dawson Strategic in Ottawa. "Canadians maybe can't believe this zombie pipeline, that cannot be killed, has re-emerged again," said Phillips in an interview. Phillips predicts Trump's campaign promises to approve Keystone XL may come up against the reality of the controversial project. "He also had a big caveat to that, which is he would want America to have a bigger share of the pie, and we don't know what

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that means," he said. "Even if the new U.S. administration is supportive and gives its approval, there are still a lot of key steps that have to happen before that pipeline gets built."



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