

Claire Hoy, National Affairs ? Irresponsible fear-mongering

When British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871, it was on the strength of a promise from the federal government that the railroad stretching all the way from eastern Canada would soon be extended to their province.

The gold rush had ended, and British Columbians saw the economic benefits that a railroad would bring, so they enthusiastically welcomed the project.

Times change.

History shows that the railroad ? long a dream of Sir John A. Macdonald, our first prime minister ? had a profound impact on Canada's economic success as a nation.

Fast forward to 2014, and Canada's future prosperity clearly relies substantially upon our fortunate abundance of oil and gas, particularly given the ongoing turmoil in the oil-rich Middle East.

Yet, rather than jump at the opportunity to substantially improve the lives of all Canadians ? and not just those who benefit directly from gas and oil ? many of our present-day politicians are doing everything in their power to block the orderly growth of our most important industry.

Had leaders such as Tom Mulcair and Justin Trudeau ? and B.C. Premier Christy Clark ? been around in the 1870s, this country likely would never have been built. The West would almost certainly have become part of the United States.

But rather than embrace the golden opportunities currently presented by the present-day economic equivalent of the CPR, i.e. the oil sands and the Northern Gateway pipeline proposal ? the project tentatively approved last week by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on the advice of a broadly-based panel of experts ? our so-called political ?leaders? are essentially vowing to do everything they can to stop it.

It's one thing ? and completely legitimate ? to make sure that development respects environmental and safety rules, but it's quite another thing to attempt to stop something that will benefit Canadians from coast to coast, wherever they live and whatever they do for a living.

To hear the fearmongers tell it, you'd think pipelines represent the end of the world as we know it.

Yet we've had TransCanada pipelines operating since the early 1950s in this country. Sure, there have been a few spills over the years, but few have had any significant impact on the environment and pipelines are indisputably much safer than carrying petroleum products by rail.

Canada is the third largest producer of natural gas in the world; we're the sixth largest producer of crude and the fifth largest overall energy producer. It's the lifeblood of our economy, and only a fool and/or extreme econut would attempt to put an end to its orderly expansion.

Indeed, the petroleum industry invested \$62 billion in Canada in 2011, representing a full 20% of the total value of the Toronto Stock Exchange. It accounted for 550,000 direct and indirect jobs and paid \$18 billion in taxes to various governments. In short, we need the oil and gas business to continue enjoying one of the world's best lifestyles.

Yet there they were, the professional naysayers Mulcair and Trudeau, immediately pledging that if they were elected prime minister they'd put a stop to pipeline expansion. And who knows what else?

Mulcair, in an astounding display of irresponsible fear-mongering by a federal leader, predicted there will be ?civil disobedience? if the pipeline goes ahead.

And Clark, who has been on all sides of virtually every major issue in her quest for votes, is still demanding that even if the pipeline gets all the approvals it must obtain before construction begins, B.C. should get its ?fair share? of the profits from the venture. What, exactly, B.C. has done to earn a share is a mystery, but there you are.

Mulcair, explaining why an NDP government (perish the thought) would shut down the project and start a new environmental process, said, ?We live in a society based on the rule of law. Parliament sets the rules and a new Parliament under an NDP government would indeed insist that it is madness ? (Enbridge) would not be allowed to bring supertankers into the Douglas Channel.?

And Trudeau echoed Mulcair's pledge to block the project, obviously bowing the mouthy minority of eco-maniacs and assorted screaming lefties who see the petroleum industry as the devil incarnate.

Both ignore the obvious benefits the project will bring ? which is no doubt why the latest opinion polls show more Canadians are in favor of the project than opposed to it, despite the unending stream of anti-oil news coverage in the mainstream media.

And both also ignore the fact that the panel which recommended the pipeline go ahead ? if, indeed, it meets a host of preconditions ? was not a oil industry cheerleading group and was legally constituted to do the job.

If these people really cared about what is best for Canada, they'd certainly focus on legitimate environmental and Native concerns, while doing what they can to boost our sagging economy

