

Claire Hoy ? Only fools stand in its way

Canadian rock singer Neil Young clearly twists his 'facts' about the so-called dangers of the \$7-billion Keystone pipeline project, but at least he has the guts to take a firm position.

Not so U.S. President Barack Obama.

With one eye towards his anti-oil Democratic Party financial contributors ? with the mid-term elections on the horizon ? Obama announced this week he is extending the government comment period on the pipeline, a move guaranteed to move any decision beyond the Nov. 4 elections.

The thing has already been studied to death, and there's no question that the scare-mongering of the opponents has been shown to be dead wrong on almost all counts. Even the U.S. State Department, hardly a hotbed of pro-oil activists, has released the results of its long study and concluded the pipeline has more positive impacts than negatives going for it.

But Obama, alas, doesn't have the courage of his convictions. That is, assuming he has convictions beyond playing politics.

You'd think that with Russian strongman Valerie Putin moving in on the Ukraine ? and in a position to cut off energy supplies for much of Europe (not to mention the anti-American positions in big oil producing countries such as Iran and Venezuela) ? the U.S. would jump at the chance to get stable oil supplies from its friendly neighbor.

Indeed, testifying before a Senate committee on Friday, Obama's former national security advisor James Jones said oil is a powerful geopolitical weapon and killing Keystone would be a gift to Putin. Jones says he can't understand why the U.S. would spend billions and risk soldiers' to stabilize oil sources abroad, ?then reject a piece of vital infrastructure at home.?

The critics claim that Keystone would contribute massively to climate change. The facts show that whatever contribution it might make is a)- miniscule and b)-is less than it would be if the pipeline isn't built and the oil from Alberta continues to be shipped south (or anywhere else) by rail.

As for Ottawa's reaction to the latest politically motivated stall, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal statement saying, ?We are disappointed that the politics continue to delay a decision on Keystone XL. This project will create tens of thousands of jobs on both sides of the border, will enhance the energy security of North America, has strong public support, and the U.S. State Department has, on multiple occasions, acknowledged it will be environmentally sound.?

While Obama caters to the anti-oil fearmongers out there ? who sometimes have a good point, but not on this project ? even many members of his own party want him to approve it, fearing that his continued refusal to okay the popular project will cost them their seats in November. Indeed, a little more than a week ago, 11 Democratic senators urged Obama to okay the project by the end of May. That's not going to happen now.

And by the way, Keystone won't be a boon just to Alberta and the other western provinces. Ontario also stands to gain thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions in increased investment either directly or indirectly from the project, all of which makes one wonder why Premier Kathleen Wynne ? who claims to be all about jobs, jobs, jobs ? doesn't have anything to say about it.

The Conference Board of Canada has estimated that Ottawa's take from the oil sands between now and 2035 will be more than \$45 billion, that's from a total tax spinoff of \$80 billion.

It is true that in the long run ? the very long run ? fossil fuels are projected to become less dominant in the energy mix, but even so, they are expected to represent about 75 per cent of energy needs in 2035, so all those dreamers who think a few windmills and other high-cost alternatives can become big-time players are completely off the planet. It's not happening, plain and simple.

You don't have to like fossil fuels to realize that our economy is essentially built on them now and for the foreseeable future.

And therefore when there's a relatively cheap and reliable and politically safe sources such as the oil sands, only an abject fool would stand in the way of taking advantage of the situation.

And if the fool happens to be the U.S. president, well, as Jones told the Senate committee, Putin must be hoisting a glass to him in the Kremlin

