



Calgary

# The end of Trans Mountain may actually hurt the environment, argues consultant



Increased shipment by rail and Notley's retaliatory action against Ottawa are among concerns

[Sarah Rieger](#) · CBC News · Posted: Sep 03, 2018 9:51 AM MT | Last Updated: September 3, 2018




Anti-pipeline demonstrators at Kinder Morgan's Westridge Terminal in early March 2018. (Gian-Paolo Mendoza/CBC)

An environmental consultant argues that not building the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion might actually be worse for the environment than if it goes ahead.

Amin Asadollahi said delays on the project, especially with other pipelines like Keystone XL on hold, will likely mean more oil being shipped by rail.

- [Crude-by-rail exports set record in June, surpass 200,000 barrels per day](#)
- [U.S. judge orders Keystone XL pipeline review in setback for Trump](#)

"We have to ask ourselves where would the oil go? At the end of the day, these are projects that are being developed and if Keystone XL doesn't proceed and Kinder Morgan is further delayed, then what we'll have is shipment by rail, which is **many times more risky than pipelines,**" said Asadollahi, who is the director of policy research with Horizon Advisors.

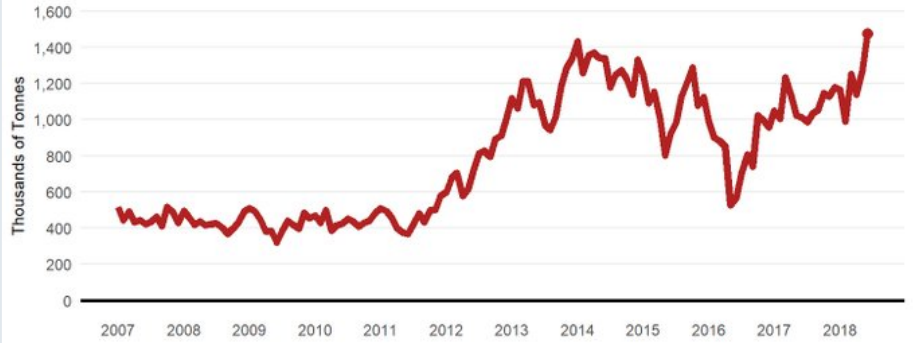


**Amin Asadollahi** 🇨🇦  
@aminpost

1. I think we should be cautious of treating yesterday's court ruling as one that is good for the environment. Oil by rail shipment is more than likely to go up.  
[twitter.com/trevortombe/st...](https://twitter.com/trevortombe/st...)

**Trevor Tombe** @trevortombe  
Today's data: Crude-by-rail shipments in Canada reach all time high. [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quoti...](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quoti...) #cdnecon #ableg

**Rail Shipments of Fuel Oils and Crude Petroleum in Canada**  
Source: Statistics Canada data table 23-10-0216



Year	Thousands of Tonnes (Approximate)
2007	450
2008	450
2009	450
2010	450
2011	450
2012	600
2013	1000
2014	1400
2015	1200
2016	600
2017	1000
2018	1500

Graph by @trevortombe

15 4:44 AM - Aug 31, 2018

15 people are talking about this

Construction on Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion began to shut down this week, after the Federal Court of Appeal quashed Ottawa's approval of the project. The ruling cited **environmental concerns and insufficient consultations with Indigenous groups.**

- [Trans Mountain pipeline ruling strikes 'devastating' blow to Canada's global reputation, energy sector warns](#)

The court ruled the National Energy Board did not adequately address the impact an increase in tanker traffic could have on killer whale populations in waters near Burnaby, B.C.

"So, we would have to ask ourselves, well what is the political and environmental implications of all of this," said Asadollahi.

## Oil-by-rail spills

There have been a number of high-profile oil-by-rail spills in recent years, but according to Mike Priaro, a Calgary-based oil and gas consultant with 25 years industry experience, comparing pipelines to rail is like comparing apples to oranges.

"Pipelines are a safer way to transport oil, but pipelines can also have leaks. The one advantage of rail is that the spills tend to be smaller," said Priaro.





A aerial view of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain marine terminal filling a oil tanker in Burnaby, B.C., in May 2018. (Jonathan Hayward/Canadian Press)

---

He pointed to disasters like the [Enbridge oil spill](#) in the Kalamazoo River as an example of pipeline transport going wrong.

Priaro was happy to see the Court of Appeal rule against Trans Mountain — because he said there are **better options**.

He points to the fact tankers carrying oil from Trans Mountain via the **Westbridge Terminal would have to traverse a "high-liability path"** as one argument against it being an environmentally sound option, as was cited in the court's decision.

Instead, he would like to see the **Eagle Spirit Energy Corridor** built — a **First Nations-led pipeline project that would provide direct access to deep water and a higher capacity** than Trans Mountain. It is currently blocked by a federal moratorium on tankers along B.C.'s northern coast.

- [The B.C. pipeline project you've never heard of — and why it may succeed](#)

"It's a sustainable pipeline," Priaro said, arguing that the access to open water makes it a safer option.

## Notley's retaliation against Ottawa another concern

But Asadollahi is concerned about more than just how oil will get safely to tidewater.

He's worried about Alberta Premier Rachel Notley's **retaliatory move to pull the province out of the national climate-change plan** in protest of the Federal Court's ruling.

- [Premier Rachel Notley pulls Alberta out of federal climate plan over Trans Mountain ruling](#)

"Canada needs Alberta's climate leadership in order to realized the benefits of the pan-Canadian climate plan. Without Alberta, there is no pan-Canadian climate plan," Asadollahi



said.

He fears delays to Trans Mountain could help propel the United Conservative Party to a victory in Alberta, which he said "would most likely result in a setback for the environment and dismantling of the policies and programs that have been put in place to improve Alberta's oilsands emissions" — concerns echoed by a group of clean technology executives from British Columbia last March.

- [B.C. clean tech group warns pipeline fight could derail climate change progress](#)

One thing both can both agree on is that while environmental concerns are valid and pressing — oil and gas isn't going anywhere soon, and a solution is needed.

"At the end of the day, if the upstream oil and gas sector suffers, workers suffer," Adadollahi said.

- [MORE CALGARY NEWS | Check out Western Canada's first public, driverless shuttle](#)
- [Trans Mountain pipeline ruling leaves workers and companies in limbo](#)
- Read more articles by [CBC Calgary](#), like us on [Facebook](#) for updates and subscribe to our [CBC Calgary newsletter](#) for the day's news at a glance

©2019 CBC/Radio-Canada. All rights reserved.

Visitez [Radio-Canada.ca](#)