

State of Vermont

House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 5

Joint resolution opposing the transmission of oil derived from tar sands, also known as bitumen, through Vermont via the Portland-Montreal Pipe Line system

Offered by: Representatives Webb of Shelburne, Cheney of Norwich, Deen of Westminster, Klein of East Montpelier, McCullough of Williston, and Ram of Burlington

Whereas, attention has been focused on the energy production potential of oil derived from the tar sands of Alberta, also known as bitumen, which is extracted from the ground in solid form, and

Whereas, prior to being transported through a pipeline, bitumen must be diluted with chemicals, including neurotoxins such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which adversely affect the central nervous system, and

Whereas, diluted bitumen must be transported under high pressure and at high temperatures, and it contains more hazardous materials and toxins than crude oil, resulting in a more abrasive and corrosive material that when exposed to oxygen becomes more susceptible to an explosion, and

Whereas, Enbridge Inc., the owner of the large Line 9 pipeline system that extends from Sarnia, Ontario to Montreal has filed a permit application with the Canadian National Energy Board to reverse this pipeline's flow to transport bitumen from Sarnia, Ontario to Montreal, and there has been public discussion of extending the transportation of bitumen to Portland, Maine via the Portland-Montreal Pipe Line (PMPL) system, which the ExxonMobil subsidiary Portland Pipe Line Corporation owns, and

Whereas, the 236-mile-long Portland-Montreal Pipe Line system is a set of three parallel pipelines constructed between 1941 and 1965 to carry crude oil from Portland to Montreal, and

Whereas, the oldest of these three pipelines has not carried crude oil since 1982, and the second oldest was temporarily taken out of service in 2011 and filled with nitrogen to prevent corrosion, and

Whereas, the transporting of bitumen from Montreal to Portland would require reversing the directional flow on one or more of the three PMPL pipelines, and

Whereas, the pipeline that was temporarily out of service is thought to be the most likely PMPL pipeline to be converted to transporting bitumen, and

Whereas, spills of less flammable crude oil traveling through the PMPL system took place in 1950, 1960, and 1977, and

Whereas, bitumen is a potentially hazardous substance that can contain chemicals that can have serious health effects on humans, and

Whereas, bitumen contains heavy metals that when exposed to the environment do not degrade and, thus, can bioaccumulate in the environment and wildlife, and

Whereas, in 2009, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued a “Notice of Amendment” to ExxonMobil to implement substantial changes to the PMPL’s emergency response procedures, in part to address exposure of the pipelines at a number of stream crossings, and

Whereas, an increasing number of Vermonters are opposed to the transporting of bitumen through Vermont, and the 350Vermont environmental organization is organizing to prevent bitumen from being transported through Vermont, and

Whereas, one aspect of the 350Vermont effort is to place a resolution on town meeting ballots in March opposing the transporting of bitumen through Vermont, and

Whereas, the Burlington City Council has voted to place an advisory question on its Town Meeting Day ballot seeking the voters’ opinion on the possible shipment of bitumen through Vermont, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly opposes the transmission of oil derived from tar sands, also known as bitumen, through Vermont via the Portland-Montreal Pipe Line system, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Stephen Wuori, President, Liquids Pipelines and Major Projects at Enbridge Inc. in Toronto, to Portland Pipe Line Corporation in Raymond, Maine, to Andrew Simon at 350Vermont, to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, and to the Vermont Congressional Delegation.