

NAFTA:

Driving Force Behind Tar Sands Oil Extraction- *the Most Environmentally Destructive Project on Earth!*

Due to conflicts with the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) nations in the Middle East, the United States has cast its eyes northward to the tar sands region in Alberta, a western province in Canada that shares a border with Montana, to supply the majority of its oil in the future. This region currently contains vast swaths of biologically diverse boreal forests and muskeg, as well as the oil rich tar sands which lie beneath them. Who will win out? The oil companies or the boreal forests? Well, thanks to NAFTA's so-called "proportionality clause" and investment-protections included in the agreement, it will take nothing less than the abandonment or wholesale re-writing of NAFTA to secure the future safety of the boreal forests.



The Albion Sands mine near Fort McMurray in Alberta, Canada, are at the forefront of a global rush for 'unconventional' deposits.

Photograph: Jeff McIntosh/AP

Q: How much does the U.S. really rely on the tar sands?

A: Bitumen from the tar sands is a driving force in the US economy, supplying 1/5 of total U.S. oil imports.

Q: Isn't bitumen a safer alternative to crude oil

A: No! Bitumen produces three times the amount of greenhouse gases as conventional oil. Not to mention, the extraction process of the tar sands industry uses 3 barrels of fresh water per barrel of oil and burns enough natural gas to heat four million homes per day. Meanwhile, pressed extraction of the tar sands is causing a gaping hole the size of Florida to rapidly replace the boreal forests and muskeg in the Canadian Province of Alberta.

Q: How does NAFTA fit into this equation again?

A: The proportionality clause in NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), found in articles 315 and 605, forces Canada to continue exporting its oil in the same proportion that they have been exporting in the past 36 months, which is approximately 2/3 of Canada's total production.

Corporate investors have used NAFTA's investor-state enforcement system to challenge domestic court rulings, local and state environmental policies, municipal contracts, tax policy, federal controlled substances regulations, federal and state anti-gambling policies, emergency efforts to prevent the spread of mad cow disease, a federal government's alleged failure to provide water rights, and even the provision of public postal services. Don't let them continue their reign of destruction!

CALL ON YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS TODAY AND TELL THEM TO SUPPORT THE TRADE ACT AND THE LEGISLATION TO REPEAL NAFTA!

If you aren't sure who represents you in Congress, go to <http://snipurl.com/LegLookup> to find out.

BY PHONE: Call your Senators and Representatives (if you can't get their numbers from the link above, you can call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Representative's and Senators' offices. When you reach your elected official's offices, ask to speak to their legislative assistant on international trade. When you reach the assistant, give your name, say that you are a constituent, and say that you want your rep to vote for the TRADE Act and the Bill to Repeal NAFTA. Here's a sample of what you can say during your call:

Hi, my name is _____. I live in _____ (your city) and I'm calling to ask (Representative/Senator) _____ to vote for the TRADE Act and the Bill to Repeal NAFTA. I'm concerned that NAFTA's protection of the tar sands industry through the proportionality clause will destroy the biodiverse boreal forests in Canada. I'm also concerned that the unlimited investor rights of NAFTA will harm local attempts to ban the harmful tar sands oil. I'd appreciate a statement in writing explaining (Rep/Senator) _____ position on this issue. My address is (your address).

BY EMAIL: Click on "Send Message" for your two Senators and your Representative: Send an email to the attention of your legislator's aide on trade issues expressing your opinion on your legislators' vote on this issue. You can use the sample letter below as a model for your letter.

BY FAX OR MAIL: Click on "View Info" for your Senators and Representatives and copy their fax numbers and mailing addresses. Write letters to your Representatives and both of your Senators expressing your opinion on their vote on this issue. Put your letter to the attention of your legislators' aide on trade issues. Fax and/or mail your letter. You can use the sample letter below as a model for your letter.

SAMPLE LETTER

(Send a separate to each of your legislators. Fill in your address, the date, choose Senator or Representative, your legislators' name, and choose one or the other of the words in parentheses, depending on your legislator's vote. Please modify and personalize using the additional info on this issue provided at the top of this alert)

(Your Address)
(Your City, State and Zip)
(Month Date, Year)

(Senator/ Representative) (First and Last Name)
(Your Legislator's DC Office Street Address
City, State and Zip)

Dear (Senator /Representative) (Last Name):

I am very concerned about the tar sands industry and our nation's connection to this trade. I am also concerned about NAFTA's proportionality clause, which locks Canada into exporting 2/3 of its tar sands production here. Thanks to the investor protection rights, also in NAFTA, our nation cannot legally ban the tar sands, even if it causes energy shortages in Canada. Any decision by a Canadian province or federal government to cut back on oil and gas exports for the sake of conservation, greenhouse gas emission reductions, the creation of jobs in the petrochemical industry or diversion of petroleum to eastern provinces could be forbidden by NAFTA's proportional sharing obligations. The massive tar sands industry causes the wasteful disposal of 3 barrels of water for every barrel of oil, emits three times the amount of greenhouse gases as ordinary oil, and will destroy large parts of the precious boreal forest in Canada.

The Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment Act, or TRADE Act, sets forth the food and product safety, environmental and labor standards; federalism protections; agriculture rules; national security exceptions; and currency antimanipulation and trade remedy rules that must be included in all American trade pacts. This Act also lists what *cannot* be included in future American trade agreements, including service sector privatization and deregulation requirements; bans on Buy American and anti-sweat shop or environmental procurement policies; new rights and privileges for foreign investors to promote offshoring and expose domestic health and environmental laws to attacks in foreign tribunals; and special protections for Big Pharma to limit affordable access of generic medicines.

I urge you to vote for the TRADE Act and the Bill to Repeal NAFTA. Please write back to me with your position on this issue.

Sincerely, (Your name).