

YOUR ELECTION GUIDE TO TACKLING THE TAR SANDS



www.greenpeace.ca/tarsands

SEND YOUR IDEAS, PICTURES AND VIDEO TO
mike.hudema@greenpeace.org

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO TACKLING THE TAR SANDS

Introduction:

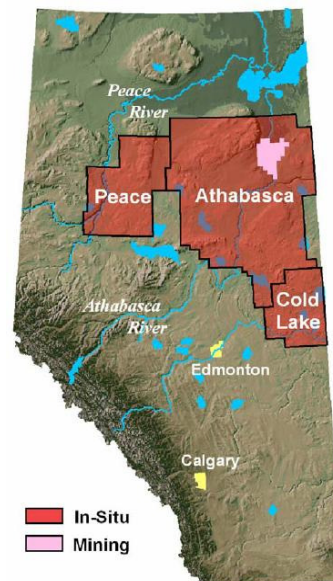
Every single day, more than one million barrels of oil are taken out of the tar sands. The tar sands located in northern Alberta represent the second largest oil reserve in the world but getting that oil out of the ground comes at an incredible cost. The tar sands, if fully developed, will destroy or displace almost one-quarter of Alberta, an area as large as the state of Florida. In the process it will poison the Athabasca River and destroy 141,000 sq km of Boreal forest. The rapidly rising greenhouse gas emissions from the tar sands are the largest single barrier to Canada meeting its international obligations on climate change.

The tar sands are one of the dirtiest sources of oil under development anywhere in the world. It takes far more energy to get a barrel of oil from the tar sands as it does from conventional means. In addition, the tar sands use two to five barrels of fresh water for every barrel of oil produced. The majority of that water cannot be returned to the natural environment. Instead it will sit in huge toxic tailings ponds that already span over 170 sq km of Alberta — and are growing every day.

The land that is being destroyed is primarily Boreal forest, one of the most diverse forest ecosystems in the world and known to many as the “lungs of the earth,” or a “green halo” over the planet. The Boreal forest contains over 35 per cent of the world's wetlands and is one of the largest carbon sinks on the planet holding over 47 billion tonnes of carbon in its roots and mosses.

This area is home to several Indigenous communities that have relied on and lived off the land for thousands of years. One of these communities is Fort Chipewyan, a small town located downstream from most of the tar sands operations. People in Fort Chipewyan are experiencing abnormal health problems, increased forms of rare cancer and multiple sclerosis that all may be a result of tar sands operations.

Farther away the destruction is just as severe. Pipelines threaten to displace communities across the country and the United States. New refineries and upgraders are displacing farmland, traditional territories and present increased



health issues for local communities. Proposed oil supertankers are threatening the west coast. And tar sands technology that companies are developing here now threatens to destroy areas from Utah, to Trinidad Tobago, Venezuela and the Congo.

With less than five per cent of tar sands operations currently online, the costs of the tar sands are already too high and are ripping Alberta apart. The tar sands are one of the world's largest environmental and social disasters. If we care about Canada and our planet, we must stop the tar sands.

Global Warming and the Tar Sands:

Global warming is a worldwide concern considered to be one of the greatest threats facing our planet today. It will have detrimental impacts on human health, wildlife, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and our economy. According to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), human activity is the primary driver of global warming. Despite this, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, and Canada is contributing to further climate change.

The tar sands are the fastest-rising source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. Canada has already reneged on the promises we made under the Kyoto Protocol, due in large part to rising emissions from the tar sands and the political influence of the oil industry. Under business-as-usual forecasts, GHG emissions from the tar sands could triple over the next decade, which would single-handedly prevent Canada from meeting our international obligations on climate change for 2020.

People all over the world are already feeling the effects of the global climate crisis. Just last year the first habited island, Lohachara, was evacuated due to rising sea levels, creating over 10,000 global warming refugees. According to the Global Humanitarian Forum over 300,000 people will die this year due to climate change and 27 million people are already climate refugees.

As a nation we need to lead the way out of the problem, not further into it.



Water and the Tar Sands:

Water is the source of all life on this planet, a resource referred to by the First Peoples of Canada as the blood of the earth. It is a precious and finite natural resource that must be treasured and protected, but with the development of the tar sands, we are doing neither.

- Tar sands development requires an enormous amount of water — current projects remove about 349 million cubic metres of water from the Athabasca River each year, equivalent to about 140,000 swimming pools or twice the amount of water used by the entire City of Calgary (home to over one million people).
- It takes two to five barrels of fresh water to extract one barrel of oil from the tar sands. As current tar sands production is at over one million barrels of oil per day the tar sands are now the single largest user of groundwater in Alberta.
- Much of the water used ends up in tailings ponds (large pools of toxic water and mining waste). Tailings lakes leak toxic pollution into the water system having impacts throughout the region. Downstream communities have noticed greater incidences of cancer and diseases like lupus and multiple sclerosis in their community and have been warned not to eat fish, their traditional diet, on a regular basis.



Boreal Forest and the Tar Sands:

Canada's Boreal forest is one of the last wild forests left in the world. It is home to thousands of plants and animals, contains 35 per cent of Canada's wetlands and is home to numerous First Nations communities.



- 4.3 million hectares of the Boreal forest will be clearcut if the tar sands are fully developed. This is 23 per cent of Alberta — an area the size of the state of Florida.
- The Boreal forest, known as the “lungs of the planet,” will be ripped out, all for oil.
- The Boreal forest is also one of the world's largest carbon sinks holding more than 47 billion tonnes in its trees and soils. If this forest is cut down or its soils are disturbed by heavy machinery, carbon from this storehouse will be released into the atmosphere, further accelerating the global climate crisis.

Social Costs of the Tar Sands:

Human health depends on a healthy environment. When the environment becomes contaminated, we feel the impacts in the form of increases in the rate of disease and infection. Economically and socially marginalized communities are

disproportionately affected by these impacts because too often they are the communities closest to the sources of health risks, such as the toxic waste sites of tar sands developments. Tar sands development is having severe negative effects on the health of communities in Alberta, in particular the traditional stewards of the lands, the First Nations of northern Alberta.

- Fort McMurray is currently deficient in 70 out of 72 quality-of-life indicators developed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, including a shortage of affordable housing (or simply access to any housing) and wait lists to see doctors.
- Communities downstream from the tar sands are experiencing cancer rates far higher than the norm. Leukemia, lymphoma, lupus and rare forms of cancer have all increased in recent years in the population that is for the most part made up of Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree First Nations. The concerns of these communities, their traditional knowledge, and the perspectives of their supporters, have been silenced by powerful proponents of increased tar sands development.
- The Beaver Lake Cree alone have cited over 20,000 treaty rights violations due to tar sands companies operating on their traditional territory.



TAKING ACTION:



So I want to help save the planet. What can I do?

1. **Conduct an Environmental Survey of the Candidates running in your riding:** One of the first steps in taking action is getting informed about where the candidates in your riding stand regarding the environment. Greenpeace has developed a short survey that you can send to your candidates to see what their views are. If you want to get a survey email mike.hudema@greenpeace.org. When you get the results, don't keep them to yourselves. Post them to Facebook, alert your local media, Tweet about it to ensure that as many as people as possible know who supports their values.
2. **Organize a Public Forum in Your School or Community:** Knowledge is power and one of the best ways to get your school or community group informed about what is really happening in the tar sands is to hold a forum. Invite all the candidates in your riding to present to your community or school. Select a moderator, decide on a forum format and publicize your event. Pose some environmental questions to each candidates to get things started then open things up to the public.

Contact the Alberta Greenpeace office at (780) 430-9202 for more information or for help in setting up events. Greenpeace can also provide you with fact sheets and tar sands pamphlets.

3. Confront the “Leaders”

Right now the “leaders” of each federal party are flying around the country making campaign promises. The federal government is allowing tar sands destruction to continue. The federal government has the power to turn things around and the responsibility to protect water, address the climate crisis and live up to treaty obligations with First Nation communities but they are failing in all three. It’s time that the public got some answers and our “leaders” address where they stand.

4. When you hear about an event in your community that one of the leaders (or other candidates) will be attending, why not go and get some answers? Bird-dog (follow) the leaders or other candidates and confront them with anti-tar sands messages. Dress as a polar bear, create a piece of street theatre — the sky is the limit. Here are some quick ideas.

You could:

- a. Bring blown up pictures of the tar sands with you and simply ask — why?
- b. Bring a banner with a **Stop the Tar Sands** message on it.
- c. Stand up and sing the U.S. national anthem — that’s where all the oil and money is going anyway.
- d. Confront the leaders with a “tarry” display: We have an easy recipe for fake oil that can create a great visual and convey a powerful message for any campaign stop.



Here's how to create it:

OILY RECIPE



Ingredients

You will need a few pots of molasses (thick black sugar syrup). One pot of 500g will be enough to cover 2 people.

- 1 bottle of corn oil
- 2 boxes of corn starch
- 1 carton of coco powder
- 1 bag of flour



Instructions

Mix 1 part corn oil with 2 parts corn starch and 1 part cocoa powder. Thicken the mixture with extra starch or basic flour to get the thickness that you wish. You don't want it to be too runny.



First place a thin layer of the sticky molasses all over the body.

Next add the the cocoa/corn starch mixture on top.

Avoid getting this on any items of clothing that you care about.



Keep some of the molasses and mix on the side - and take it with you for your oily activity in case you need to touch up!

The mix is non-toxic and non-irritating for the skin but here's some things you need to be aware of:



Avoid using this mixture on a very hot summer day, as it is so full of sugar that it may attract bees and other insects.

The mixture is very sticky and takes some washing to clean off (certainly in hair) - so make sure that you set up a good washing system after your activity.



When you confront the ‘leaders’, it would be a great idea to film it and post the video on Youtube if you can, so that others can see the growing dissent. You can find a brief how to at:
<http://www.ambushtv.us/html/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=2>

5. Write Letters to the Editor for your Local Paper



This is one of the easiest things you can do. If you see an article on the election or hear a report that you want to speak out on, then do it! Did you know that the letters page is the most-read section of the newspaper? The press wants to hear your voice and so do the thousands of readers that go through a paper every day. Remember, while you can write to just your local paper, you can also submit your letters to bigger papers like the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*, as well as national papers like the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*.

What is a Letter to the Editor?

Letters to the editor (LTEs) most often discuss a recent event/issue covered by a publication, radio station, or TV program.

They are your chance to “sound off” to your community about issues in the news. **They are widely read** — so make them an important part of your media strategy.

Elements / Hint

It is much easier to publish a letter to the editor than it is to place an op-ed.

Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper. Respond as quickly as you can.

Read the Letters page — you will learn how to develop an effective letter-writing style, and you will see if someone has already responded with your idea.

Keep it short and concise — 150-200 words. The paper will take the liberty to shorten your letter to suit its format; the more it has to cut, the less control you have of what gets printed.

Lead with your most important information.

Focus on one main point and make a compelling case.

Write in short paragraphs, with no more than three sentences per paragraph.

Don't write too often. Once every three months is about as often as you should write

Avoid personal attacks.

Put your full name, address and phone number at the top of the page and sign the letter at the bottom. You must include a phone number for verification purposes.

Follow up to see if the letter was received.

6. Join Greenpeace and become a Volunteer in the Fight to Stop the Tar Sands.

Stopping the development of the tar sands is not going to be solved by this election and it means confronting the world's richest corporations and a powerful government.

Greenpeace exists because this fragile Earth deserves a voice. It needs solutions. It needs change. It needs action and with our office in Alberta we are hoping to provide just that.

We have lots of upcoming action and volunteer opportunities, ranging from staffing information tables, designing materials, and writing reports, to helping with direct action events. If you would like to join the effort please sign up to volunteer at

<http://volunteer-action.greenpeace.ca/>.





**Stopping global
warming is as
easy as replacing
a lightbulb.***

***and by lightbulb, we mean the fossil fuel industry.**



www.ourclimate.ca