

LETTER OF THE DAY

Much has changed in oil tanker transport

Report cited by Living Oceans Society was out of date: energy consultant

Re: Probability of oil spill low, risk assessment analysis shows; Environmentalists, island communities question findings of study done for Kinder Morgan, Jan. 11

Living Oceans Society's Karen Wristen states that the 1990 federal government-commissioned oil spill study predicted a catastrophic (defined as over 10,000 tonnes) spill in Canadian waters every 15 years, with the probability of a major spill (100-10,000 tonnes) being annually. She then asks someone to explain how the Kinder Morgan study can show far lower spill probabilities.

That federal report, the Brander-Smith report, relies on spill statistics from a 1971 Canadian Coast Guard memo — that 43-year-old memo was written based on the pre-1971 years in history for worldwide tanker spills. The Brander-Smith report cautioned that their predictions assumed nothing would change in tanker operations. As a result of Exxon Valdez and other accidents, operations, design, and regulation of tankers changed in Canada and across the world, resulting in world tanker spill frequency (over 700 tonnes) dropping 93 per cent from the 1970s to the years 2010-12.

We now have mandatory use of double-hulled oil tankers, GPS navigation, tethered tugs, coastal pilots, and other safety measures in B.C. waters to bring



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Modern oil tankers, such as the double-hull Chemroute Pegasus built in 2012, do not pose nearly the same risk of a spill as older ships, such as the single-hull Exxon Valdez that was built in 1985.

tankers into Vancouver Harbour, all new since the 1970s.

I am surprised that Wristen did not check actual Canadian spill results. Why not compare predictions to historical reality, not just to other forecasts?

Canada has never had a spill over 10,000 tonnes. Both spill predictions mentioned by Wristen have been totally disproven by actual history. Oil tankers have sailed B.C. waters to and from Vancouver Harbour for a century, with no significant spill

other than one of canola oil.

I would suggest that in future, Wristen check the historical accuracy of her quoted spill predictions before she questions Kinder Morgan's forecast — or anybody's.

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