

north shore news

LETTER: Tanker comments misleading

North Shore News

June 12, 2015 12:00 AM

Dear Editor:

Re: Oil Tanker Spills an Unacceptable Risk

, June 3 Mailbox

In my opinion, (letter-writer) Virginia Tupper of the North Shore NOPE (an anti-Kinder Morgan project organization) grossly misleads your readers by stating that Kinder Morgan's TERMPOL (marine risk) evidence for their expansion indicates "... an expected incident every 64 years per tanker" with 79 per cent of all incidents categorized as "serious or total loss."

Her claim about the evidence is true but irrelevant. This part of the TERMPOL 3.8 marine risk study, page 7 and 8, is not a prediction for the (Trans Mountain Pipeline) expansion, but rather is clearly marked as a review of "Global Tanker Incidents" 2002-2011, where accident frequency and severity were immensely worse than Canada or B.C.

Her comment on the percentage of incidents that are serious or total loss also refers to global traffic.

In short, in my opinion, her fear-mongering comments are highly misleading, in that a typical reader would infer that these statements referred to Kinder Morgan's British Columbia project. They do not.

Ms. Tupper might have noted the comment on TERMPOL 3.8, page seven, regarding global tanker incidents: "It should be noted that only a fraction of the total incidents led to oil spills."

She might also have mentioned, in the global context, that since 1970, tanker traffic (billion ton-miles) has increased about 60 per cent; yet, "large" spills (over 700 tonnes) have decreased from their mid-1970s peaks by about 95 per cent.

There was only one such spill across the world in 2014. (Source: ITOPF).

Canada in its marine history since 1970 has only had two large tanker spills, both old single-hulled vessels in the 1970s on the east coast. B.C., in more than a century of tanker operations, has never had a reportable spill from an oil tanker plying our waters (except canola oil). Tankers sail all major Canadian waters, including the Great Lakes, the source of drinking water for Ontario and many American states, without incident.

Nothing guarantees we will not have an incident someday, but misleading information does not advance the debate.

John Hunter

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