

We need a government that understands that protection of the environment and a prosperous economy are inextricably intertwined.

There are two aspects to this: 1) polluters must pay for the damage they cause, and 2) it's increasingly clear that doing things the wrong way environmentally is *not* a way to avoid costs – it does the opposite.

1) Polluters Must Pay

Polluters must pay for water, air, land, and greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change – all of it. We don't have financial statements for business that include a line item for the amount attributable to environmental degradation – but we should. If the polluter doesn't pay for, the rest of us do – whether directly for damage, or indirectly because of the long-term effects of degradation. And that's not right.

For this reason, I have long supported a price on carbon.

2) Not Being Environmentally Smart Actually Costs More

Ironically, doing badly for the environment costs us economically too. Doing the right thing environmentally, especially up front, costs less.

Take the Keystone XL pipeline. If the builders knew of a more environmentally safe route, around a sensitive area rather than right through it – why didn't they recommend that route right from the beginning, rather than wait for Darryl Hannah to be arrested in front of the White House? This is a clear case of lost profits, lost economic activity because the promoters didn't do the right thing environmentally from the beginning. The fact that the pipeline has been so delayed – indeed may still not be approved – has a huge economic cost.

Had the initial efforts for a Northern Gateway been done differently with respect to both aboriginal issues and the environment, by both the private and public sectors, it might have been a safer, cleaner, and more politically viable alternative by now – and we could be closer to getting Canadian oil to Asian markets. The economic cost of doing it badly environmentally is that we will remain a captive customer of the US, with associated discounts to our revenues, far longer than we should. And the recent report of the Int'l Energy Agency should give us even more cause for concern. If not doing things properly on the environmental front means delays or even refusal, and the US needs less and less of our oil, we need access to other markets more and more.

Had the companies exploiting the oil sands done more, sooner, to address the environmental degradation; to remediate; to ensure that the tailings didn't pollute waterways; and most of all, to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions – they would have far fewer people protesting them, and far more people willing to let Canada gain access through the US and BC to other markets. A large number of those protests are not just based on local environmental concerns, but protests against the idea of allowing ANY export of “dirty oil”. Had those exploiting the oil sands done things better environmentally, they wouldn't be suffering the economic costs of delays and market challenges.