

Green jobs, yes we can. Tar sands, no we can't.

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We want to first express that we join with the millions of people who have been inspired by your message of hope. You have demonstrated vision in your commitment to take seriously the reality of climate change and diminishing energy resources.

We understand that your first foreign visit will be to Canada. Please know that you are welcomed warmly to our country. There has been much said and speculated about this upcoming visit, particularly around the potential for North American action on climate change and energy issues.

As you prepare for your visit, we ask you to recognize the very serious consequences of continued reliance on tar sands oil and the obstacle this presents in moving towards sustainable energy production and consumption in our countries. There are dramatic environmental and social impacts caused by tar sands production. First Nations communities near tar sands development have raised concerns over unusually high rates of rare cancers and the lack of recognition of aboriginal title and treaty rights.

The process for extracting and upgrading bitumen from the tar sands is very energy intensive and generates 3 to 5 times as much greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution as the production of conventional oil. Canada is already failing to meet its Kyoto commitments and plans for substantial increases in tar sands oil production for export over the next decade or so will set our country on the wrong path. In addition to contributing to climate change, tar sands production is responsible for the depletion and contamination of water in Alberta and destroys large tracts of boreal forest.

While energy security for both Canadians and Americans is essential we also need swift and decisive action on climate change. Uncontrolled development in the tar sands and real action on climate change are mutually exclusive. Further, costly and unproven technological fixes such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) do not provide 'silver bullet' solutions to addressing emissions from the tar sands.

Instead, our countries must work towards greater conservation, improved energy efficiency measures and green job development. No new approvals for tar sands development is a first step in reducing further environmental and social destruction. Ultimately we need to prevent increased production and reverse the damage caused.

In your discussions with the Canadian government, we encourage you to raise concerns over the environmental and social problems associated with tar sands production and make no exemption for the tar sands in any binational agreement addressing climate change.

Sincerely,

The undersigned.

