**Line 5 is a real threat to the Great Lakes**

**Regina Gasco-Bentley, Bryan Newland & Aaron Payment** USA TODAY NETWORK –January 16 2020

The Line 5 oil pipelines – 66 years old, corroded, with dents – are an immediate threat to the vast ecosystem that is the Great Lakes, provide limited value to our state’s families and businesses, and should be decommissioned as quickly as possible. We say this as major employers in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula, and as tribal leaders whose members and businesses use the propane delivered today by Line 5 – but most importantly, as stewards of the Great Lakes and our natural resources since time immemorial.

Those who support Line 5 are admitting it is dangerous by calling for a tunnel to house the pipeline. If pipeline failure isn’t a real and present danger, why do we need a tunnel?

A 1.2 million-gallon Enbridge rupture into the Kalamazoo River, among other breaks and failures in recent years, shows why we should not play Russian roulette with our Great Lakes, Michigan’s most valuable asset. Imagine tar balls of oil floating onto beaches from Leland to Alpena. The entire tourism industry of northern Michigan would be crushed for decades. Commercial fishing, vital to the livelihood and culture of many tribal members, would be ended. Sport fishing too.

If the break happened in the fall, the damage would be even more traumatic. The U.S. Coast Guard won’t venture out to address an oil spill when waves are above three feet, and a break under the ice simply could not be addressed.

Supporters of Canada-based Enbridge point to the need for propane delivered through the pipeline into the Upper Peninsula as a serious concern for residents. Let’s be clear: Those residents are our tribal members so we care especially about their well-being. But the fact is, London Economics International LLC, a consulting firm retained by the National Wildlife Federation, said the cost of decommissioning the pipeline and trucking propane in from Wisconsin would be about 5 cents a gallon.

While our tribal casinos are major economic engines for the region, we know many people who visit them are initially attracted by our pristine Great Lakes. Tourism provides more than 227,000 direct jobs every year for people who live and spend here, according to the Michigan Economic Development Commission. We understand the tunnel will create some construction jobs, mostly for people from outside the region, for a couple of years. The accounting just doesn’t add up.

You can see why the Anishinaabe people of Michigan are concerned. We’ve been here for generations, and we will be here for generations more. We’ve seen too often what happens when a people ignore the future for short-term benefits today.

We will continue to advocate for the lakes and our future. We will continue to support the lawsuit Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel is pursuing to shut down Line 5.

*Regina Gasco-Bentley is chairperson of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Bryan Newland is the president/chairperson of the Bay Mills Indian Community and Aaron Payment is tribal chairperson of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.*

**Line 5 tunnel has winners and losers**

**Patty Peek & Gary Street** Guest columnists USA TODAY NETWORK–January 16 2020

Thousands of jobs of hard-working people that are essential to tourism in Northern Michigan are threatened by a Canadian company that cares only about profits. The building trade unions are supporting an Enbridge tunnel in the Straits of Mackinac. They believe it will create hundreds of temporary jobs for their members.

However, a Great Lakes oil spill will decimate jobs for thousands of workers whose income depends on the tourists that flock to the Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower Michigan.

Tourism is the lifeblood of the North. Visitors drawn to the beauty of the region will not come once Line 5 ruptures and spews oil into our waters and onto our beaches.

Drinking-water supplies for half a million people would be at risk. Commercial fishing would cease. Sport fishing and boating would suffer enormous losses as would restaurants, gift shops, grocery stores, marinas, ferry services, fudge shops, breweries, wineries, bakeries, gas stations, campgrounds... The list is endless. Economic devastation would be severe. First, jobs will disappear and then communities. Is this what Michigan wants for its future? What are the facts about jobs and the proposed tunnel?

According to the Michigan Building Trades Council, the tunnel will require 1.5-2 million man-hours for construction. At 2,000 hours per year for a single worker, this amounts to 250-350 workers. Employment numbers for the tourism industry in the north are impressive. The Michigan Economic Development Council reports that in 2018 there were 21,477 individuals that were directly employed in the tourism industry in the Northern Lower Peninsula and the Eastern Upper Peninsula. If one includes the “indirect” workers, the numbers increase to 29,965. Their labor income in 2018 (direct and indirect) was $1.04 billion! Tourism visitor spending grew at an annual rate of 3.4 percent over the period of 2011 to 2018. The Michigan Gross Domestic Product (MI GDP) grew at an annual average rate of 1.96 percent over the same time period. While the data are not exactly a one-toone comparison, they nevertheless emphasize that tourism spending in the counties of Northern Michigan is exceeding the overall Michigan GDP at nearly twice the pace.

The numbers tell the story: 250-350 construction jobs, roughly 30,000 jobs at risk, over $1 billion of income every single year that could be lost.

The Building Trades Council estimated that it would take at least two years to obtain permits, and another three to construct a tunnel. However, given delays due to legal challenges, it will likely take considerably longer. During that time the Line 5 pipelines – now 67 years old – will continue to operate and pose the risk of catastrophic rupture.

Decommissioning 645 miles of pipeline in Michigan will also result in many new jobs. The tunnel must not be built, and the existing pipelines must be shut down and decommissioned.

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