

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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February 12, 2020

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6  
Via Email: [justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca](mailto:justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca)

Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6  
Via Email: [jonathan.wilkinson@parl.gc.ca](mailto:jonathan.wilkinson@parl.gc.ca)

## **OPEN LETTER: UBCIC calls on Canada to reject the Teck Frontier oil sands mine**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Wilkinson:

We are writing to raise our grave concerns regarding Teck Resources Ltd.'s (Teck) proposed oil sands mine that is currently pending approval by the government of Canada. The Teck Frontier project is an open pit oil sands mine that would occupy over 290 square kilometers of old-growth forest, wetlands, and habitat for at-risk species. If approved, it will be constructed a mere 30 km south of Alberta's Wood Buffalo National Park, extending oil sands development and its attendant environmental effects further north. In addition to the proposed mine's impacts on Indigenous Title and Rights, and risks to the local and regional environment, it also represents a major set-back for Canada's commitments on emissions reduction.

As mandated by UBCIC Resolution 2016-06, the UBCIC Chiefs Council is committed to ensuring that any climate change plan developed by Canada must stop the further expansion of GHG emitting projects and infrastructure. Comprehensive estimates of the Frontier project's emission intensity predict that it will contribute more than 6 megatonnes to Canada's annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The expected life of the project (2026- 2066) extends well beyond the date by which Canada has committed to reducing total GHG emissions to under 150 megatonnes per year. Given the urgent need to reduce GHG emissions across the country to address the escalating climate crisis, Canada's approval of the mine would signal a significant lack of commitment to its climate strategy. We call on Canada to refrain from carrying on with

business-as-usual in the oil sands and demonstrate a willingness to meet its own emission reduction targets and better still, the scientifically determined reduction targets advanced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The UBCIC Chief's Council fully opposes mining and its associated activities near riverways of cultural and environmental significance, as confirmed through UBCIC Resolution 2019-32. The proposed Frontier mine would be constructed upstream of Wood Buffalo National Park and would not only disrupt habitat and migration routes for the endangered whooping crane, but for the nearby herds of wood bison and boreal caribou. The Joint Review Panel on the Frontier mine found that environmental disturbances caused by the mine and their effects on traditional activities will be "adverse and significant for most Indigenous groups for some or all of the factors assessed," and that the "mitigation measures proposed are not sufficient to fully mitigate these effects." As affirmed by Article 29 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of their lands. However, the environmental impacts of this proposed development, along with any conservation efforts, will be disproportionately borne by Indigenous communities and the lands and waters on which they make their livelihood.

If approved, the long-term viability of the Frontier mine will depend on Canada's continuing failure to take meaningful climate action. The immense difficulty that Canada's current and future administrations face in transitioning to net-zero emissions by 2050 will not be made easier by intensifying the extraction and distribution of fossil fuels. Given the Federal Court of Appeal's recent dismissal of the challenges put forth by Indigenous Nations against the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, it is clear the federal government will undermine Indigenous Title and Rights to prioritize an unsustainable industry.

Mining the oil sands poses an unacceptable risk to the health, safety, and livelihoods of First Nations and will contribute to the negative environmental and health impacts experienced by Indigenous peoples downstream, and of all peoples throughout the world as a result of accelerating global environmental degradation and climate change. In closing, UBCIC calls on the government of Canada to reject the proposed Frontier project.

**On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS**



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip  
President



Chief Don Tom  
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson  
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: Premier John Horgan, Province of BC  
Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change