

Milliken: Seek Alternatives to Straits Pipeline Quickly

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Michigan is called the Great Lakes State for a reason. The Great Lakes surround us, they nourish us, and they define us as Michiganders. We therefore have special responsibilities as stewards of these lakes.

Today, I am profoundly concerned about a threat that could blacken vast portions of the Straits of Mackinac, the heart of our Great Lakes.

These concerns stem from the flow of 23 million gallons per day of crude oil through two underwater steel pipelines installed in 1953, traversing the Straits west of the Mackinac Bridge. For more than six decades, Canadian Pipeline Company Enbridge has relied on a state granted easement to use our public waters and bottomlands as a high stakes shortcut for moving oil from western Canada to refineries primarily in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada across the St. Clair River from Marysville, Michigan.

In my view, these lines under the Straits might not be approved today because of the risk of serious harm. Therefore, there is a strong argument that they should no longer be used to transport oil. As a matter of principle and public trust law, the state must never risk the Great Lakes for the benefit of a private interest, especially if alternative existing pipelines or alternative routes could be used. There is too much at stake: the Great Lakes support about 800,000 Michigan jobs, providing \$54 billion a year in income.

We must do more than simply hope that Enbridge can avoid, at the Straits of Mackinac, what it allowed to happen in 2010, when an Enbridge pipeline burst near Marshall and poured a million gallons of heavy oil into the Kalamazoo River watershed.

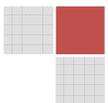
Scientific experts working with citizen groups have raised serious concerns about the Straits pipelines, including possible corrosion, dents, missing supports and the impact of invasive mussels covering the pipes.

In response to the public's growing concern, Gov. Rick Snyder formed a task force that acknowledged the state's legal duty to protect the Great Lakes from an oil spill and called, in its July report, for further study of the Straits pipelines and greater transparency from Enbridge. Snyder followed up with an executive order that established the Michigan Pipeline Advisory Board. It needs to look at the alternatives of the Enbridge pipeline including the risks that would be in increased use of freighters and trucks.

I urge that board to act with all due haste to protect the Straits, which University of Michigan researchers have called the "worst possible place" for a Great Lakes oil spill.

I call on our leaders at all levels to act swiftly to prevent a permanent stain on our Pure Michigan brand and an economic and environmental disaster at the Straits of Mackinac. We can do no less if we are to be responsible stewards of the Great Lakes — a treasure that we have a paramount duty to protect.

William G. Milliken served as Governor of Michigan from 1969 to 1983



Straits Area Concerned Citizens for Peace, Justice and the Environment

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