

Transcript of Interview with Brenda Kenny at the Canada-Asia Energy Conference on September 8, 2011. Ms. Kenny is the President & CEO of the Canada Energy Pipeline Association.

So Brenda, we've heard a huge amount over the past day or two about the opportunities for Canada in Asia in the energy space. How would you sum up what Canada's opportunities are vis a vis Asia?

I think Canada's opportunities are recognizing that we are in a very unusual position globally, in Canada, in terms of energy resources that we have. And we are a trading nation and I believe always have been. This is a wonderful opportunity to match our resources which are very, very valuable to a growing area of the world that desperately need it. We can build great partnerships from there.

What do you think is the one or two major obstacles to Canada-Asia energy?

I think one obstacle frankly is a lack of clear vision in Canada with regards to energy future and how that is tied with our other relationships. How Canada sees herself in the world quite frankly. For many, many generations we were tied to Europe and then to the US. We are becoming a global nation and it's time to step up and participate in Asia in a meaningful way.

We've heard some a lot of very smart panelists over the last days... What is the most compelling thing you've heard that you didn't already know?

That's a good question. There was a lot of good information over the past couple of days including some wonderful speakers.

I think one of the most compelling things I've heard is the importance of developing the relationships that form the foundation not just for tactical or transactional commercial ventures but for a growing relationship for trade, of cultural exchange, of partnership across the Pacific. That's going to be very important in the coming centuries and Canada has a very special tool to get there through initiating this through a major energy scale.

You talk about the need elsewhere for a national energy strategy. Why do we need and what the one or two main elements of that strategy?

I think a strategy is important to focus attention on a couple of key things that matter. Some people think of a strategy as a large volume of information and a giant how to manual. Personally, I don't look at it that way. I look at it as a clear stated intent to proceed with Canada being a global trader, strengthening relationships with Asia in a meaningful way – I'm not talking about tens of millions, I'm talking about tens or hundreds of billions of dollars and jobs that related to that. So you've got to be intentional and then you've got to be clear about the two or three things that matter most in achieving that intention. They have to do with fiscal frameworks and competitiveness, infrastructure to enable trade, and good governance and decision making tools like trade agreements and like regulations that allow you to make decisions in the public interest in a timely way.

You are dealing with two contentious public pipeline issues: Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline proposal and also Keystone XL extension to the United States. The First Nations are a major stakeholder in certainly in the Canadian context and you referred to the need for consultation. I'm wondering if you could please elaborate on that.

Consultation with First Nations is a critical underpinning of any project development in Canada and we need respect and honour that. I am sure that appropriate consultation has taken place and that interests are well understood and that traditional uses is explicitly managed to meet the needs of those First Nations. I think that's a very core part of any major project development.

It's unusual from someone from the oil patch to quote John Rawlson Saul which you did. "Canada being a Meti nation": What did you mean by that?

What I meant was, for anyone who's read "A Fair Nation", it's an interesting perspective about what makes Canada the nation it is today, and Saul's perspective on that is essentially that we came about as a nation through collaboration between nations. We did not conquer or we learnt from each other and co-developed. That has been a foothold of how we've integrated so successful in immigration from wide range of areas and as other people has said we are mirror or the globe that puts us in a very, very special place as far as taking our position on the global scale. We have great relationships already.

You've face big challenges on two big projects, Northern Gateway and Keystone. It's unclear how it they're all going to play out. Two quick questions: first, what lessons have you learnt to date if you could generalise and second, are you optimistic you will see what you want in the two cases.

First or all, lessons learnt are lessons that Canada learnt herself 50 years ago with the pipeline debate the that filled the federal government which is do not let yourself fall into the trap of having major infrastructure projects becoming a political decision. These decisions need to be based on fact, clear regulatory processes, good engagement of people and a delivery of a recommendation including conditions. That's how the Canadian system works.

In the US today, the Keystone is facing the fact that it's been through all of the regulatory decisions, been through three environmental assessments – all have cleared the hurdle of saying that this is a good project – and now we are faced with a last ditch effort by a narrow margin of the population who believe that it should not proceed while in fact there are records number of people who have worked on this as a project that is shovel ready with hundreds of thousands of jobs and tens of billions of foreign direct investment. It's time to move on that project but we respect the process underway. That's the big learning on Keystone: keep things to the facts and make sure that it's evidence base, inclusive and transparent.

Final difficult question, you referred to a global campaign against the oil sands. Is this an organized campaign with someone behind it or a disparate group of individual with different agendas?

Well, I'm going to reflect this on some of the forensics that Canadian journalists have undertaken asking that same question and it appears that it's fairly well orchestrated. I think that there are some legitimate underpinnings where people are concerned about needing to take action on climate change. We support that in fact many of our member companies are active investors in alternative energy sources. What has not been shared with the public in an open way is how do we transition towards a future energy framework which makes sense of people, where energy pairs, support the policies which are necessary, where people vote in the politicians who implement carbon pricing, for example. Those are steps that are really critical and unfortunately, some folks have chosen to pick on one small part of the issue and try to kill that part as opposed to trying to solve the problem.

Do we know who's orchestrating that campaign?

There are many major foundations involved. I would just refer you to the forensics that others have done. I'm referring to those well known journalists that began with the Vancouver Sun I believe. The concern that I voiced was simply that this is too important an issue to let ourselves as Canadians to fall into the trap of looking at the easy fix or the next bandwagon. We owe it to our grandkids and their grandkids, to actually take hold of the energy strategy that we're facing, the opportunities for Canada and the need to transition responsibly on a full sustainable development pattern which is environment, economics and social needs together. Peace and justice is part of what're we doing and I think the oils sands I think a respected component of that.