

From: Brian Simpson
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2011 9:51 AM
To: Henry Adams
Subject: Re: Strong concern about CETA and the Tar Sands

Dear Mr Adams,

Thank you for your email regarding tar sands.

I fully agree with you that we should not be encouraging the exploitation of a fuel source which is significantly more polluting than conventional oil. That would clearly be irresponsible in a carbon constrained world, at a time when we are trying to cut our greenhouse gas emissions across the board.

The EU's Fuel Quality Directive is designed to reduce the carbon footprint of all transport fuels by 6 percent by 2020. The responsibility to meet this target is placed on the fuel suppliers, who will not want to add oil from tar sands into their final fuel blend if this makes them miss their emission reduction target - as then they would not be allowed to sell their product on the European market.

As a result, the Fuel Quality Directive is the EU's safeguard against possible imports of tar sand oil from Canada, under the future Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). However the small print is crucial - the European Commission is now fine-tuning "default values" for conventional and non-conventional fuel sources, to help suppliers identify the most carbon-intensive imports. Under pressure from the Canadian government, the Commission has not come up with a separate value for tar sands, instead lumping it together with conventional oil.

Labour's lead on the environment in the European Parliament, Linda McAvan MEP, has been working with the Co-op and WWF to put pressure on the Commission to treat tar sands as the carbon intensive fuels that they are. This week she is bringing over the Co-op's "tarnished earth" street photo exhibition to Brussels, to showcase the environmental damage caused by the exploitation of tar sands. She has also put the issue on the agenda of this week's European Parliament's Environment committee.

In your email you also raise concerns about the investment protection clauses in the CETA. I understand that these could not be used to bring legal challenges against legislation such as the EU's Fuel Quality Directive, as the draft trade agreement contains environmental exemptions. As a result, the EU is free to continue to legislate to protect the environment. My colleague David Martin MEP on the European Parliament's Trade committee will be following this issue closely to make sure that the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism cannot be used to undermine social and environmental laws.

Yours sincerely,
Brian Simpson MEP