

Notley brushes off B.C. Greens

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CALGARY Premier Rachel Notley says she doesn't believe British Columbia First Nations will derail the expansion of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline, even as a prominent B.C. chief vowed Friday that the project will never be built.

The B.C. NDP and Green party have entered an agreement that looks likely to install a minority NDP government in the West Coast province.

A provision in the deal calls for the new government to use every means possible to block the expansion of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain project, with opposition from indigenous groups expected to be a key component.

Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver cited Section 35 of Canada's Constitution, which protects indigenous rights, as a number of B.C. First Nations have launched legal challenges to Ottawa's approval.

But Notley noted that other First Nations are backing the project, and it appears the legal requirements around the federal government's duty to consult have been met.

"There's not ever going to be absolute consensus along the way," Notley said at a news conference where she announced \$20 million in funding for new playgrounds.

"We'll continue to work with those who are in support of it, as well as to talk, to accommodate and hear the concerns of those who are not, around issues of marine safety, which is really the primary issue that is driving a lot of this."

Kinder Morgan says it has signed agreements with 51 indigenous communities in support of the project, including a majority of First Nations along the pipeline route.

The Trans Mountain expansion, which would significantly increase the flow of Alberta oilsands crude to the Pacific coast, is seen as vital to opening new markets in Asia and get a better price.

Notley maintains B.C. does not have the power to stop Trans Mountain, which has been approved by the federal cabinet. She has said repeatedly over the last week that the pipeline will be built.

But Stewart Phillip, grand chief of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, said Notley has simply ratcheted up the tensions with her "inflammatory" comments and said the pipeline will never move forward.

"If somebody on the east side of the Rockies is going to say, 'Come hell or high water, we're going to ram this through,' you can well imagine that people on the west side of the Rockies are going to say, 'Not on our watch, it isn't,'" he said.

Phillip said the key battle against the pipeline will be legal, with political dimensions.

There are also financial factors, he said, suggesting delays could make the project uneconomic for Kinder Morgan.

Civil disobedience is also possible if other measures fail, he said.

Kai Nagata of the Dogwood Initiative environmental group said this week the fight against Kinder Morgan hinges on First Nations opposition.

"The leaders of British Columbia, I think, are right to talk about this in terms of whether the project has consent," said the pipeline opponent.

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