

## **Enbridge Line 5: the Environmental, Ethical, and Economic Effects**

For generations, kids have recognized the Great Lakes by the acronym HOMES, standing for Lakes Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. Years later, as adults, over thirty-million of these children will recognize the Great Lakes not only as HOMES, but also as home. Because of this, the discussion of pipelines in the Great Lakes is as much delicate as it is complex. Enbridge Line 5 has recently been the subject of much criticism and equally as much defense; those who have environmental and cultural priorities denounce the pipeline as a potential environmental disaster and havoc on indigenous cultures, while those who take on a more economic stance claim that the pipeline is a major contributor to Michigan's economy. The oil pipeline became a genuine topic of conversation in the early months of 2017, though it was far from overlooked before then, especially by Michigan residents for whom the Line 5 dilemma touches closer to home. The more fiscally-minded have been adamant in their argument that the pipeline is essential to the economy of the mitten state, maintaining that the money Line 5 contributes to Michigan's economy should outweigh the environmental and cultural concerns, or at least stand a legitimate match against the other factors. Conversely, those more in tune with environmental and cultural beliefs assert that conservation of both environment and culture should trump economy.

Without question, Enbridge Line 5 proves disastrous for neighboring Great Lakes tribes, from a potential oil spill to future endeavors. Honor the Earth's National Campaigns Director, Tara Houska puts it simply: "Enbridge's plans will destroy Anishinaabe wild... and wipe out an entire culture" (Targeted News Service). The expansion of an infamously fraudulent and corrupt system as well as the failure to regulate parts already in existence present a number of hits to the

cultures of Anishinaabe, most notably the infection of a natural monument that the Native tribes hold sacred:

“Water is sacred. This is tradition. In contrast to the non-tribal utilitarian view of water, Native Americans revere water and water is life. It is integral to many

“calculates clean-up, restoration and liability costs from the defined worst-case scenario at almost \$2 billion” (“State Agencies”). It is undeniable that the potential consequences to the environment would be severe and unforgiving. Because of this, the environmentally-minded seek

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economy through an alternative than it is to create a viable alternative that will in no way impact the environment and/or cultural roots.

In this case, there are very clear and separate stances; two are inherently opposed to Enbridge Line 5 and all its components, while the other is more willing to overlook some environmental and ethnic problems in favor of an economic advantage. Though mirror images of each other in this respect, all three can be distinguished by their priorities. The first major force are the environmental advocates, who fit their character by opposing a pipeline which has and could have detrimental effects on the environment. They call attention to these effects in their fight against Line 5 in hopes of appealing to others who are less involved, less passionate, or on the fence about the issue. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the economically-minded push for Line 5 to remain open, which, under their stance, will ultimately benefit the economy. As a minimum, this group urges for a modification to the pipeline, or a near-identical alternative. Those concerned with culture and ethnicity are more in the middle, and more separate; though no less passionate, a compromise for them is not quite so easy. The environmentally-minded and especially the economically-minded have more room to find the middle ground, or at the very least more options to experiment with. This is not the case for those in defense primarily of preserving cultural backgrounds. For them, a new pipeline or adjustments to the old pipeline will still intervene with ethnic processes and will still be a disruption in their culture. Regardless of these veracities, it is obvious that those with the same end-goal will band together and cite each

priorities, while those hoping to sustain or further the economy will, for the most part, be alone in their fight.

The concerns of all three views are entirely valid. In the end, perspectives all boil down to priorities. What a person cares most about — the environment, the ethics, or the economy — will determine their ultimate stance on the Enbridge Line 5 issue. For some, this might mean opposing the pipeline, and for others it means the opposite. Those concerned with ethics and environment are lucky in that their priorities point to the same end goal; their push to decommission the pipeline is a double-backed force because of this. Those seeking to protect Michigan's economy are less fortunate, and stand alone in their fight; as much as they could agree and acknowledge that there are a plethora of environmental and ethical concerns, their primary concern is the fiscal state of Michigan, and this renders them solo.

## Works Cited

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