

Paul Band supports Trans Mountain pipeline expansion

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The Paul Band First Nation, which has seen seven train derailments in its area since 1987, has come out in support of Kinder Morgan's proposed expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline between Edmonton and Vancouver.

"Everyone is an expert in the pipelines versus oil-by-rail debate, but we know first-hand where the actual risks have been for our people over the past few decades because we have lived it," said Casey Bird, chief of the Paul Band, which has 1,926 members on its reserve on Wabamun Lake's east shore.

"Trains continue to pass through our community and through our traditional territories, but now carrying very different and much more dangerous and hazardous cargoes than they have in the past. And the 'track record' has not been good, nor is it getting any better," he said in a statement Thursday.

"We want to publicly state that we generally support pipelines as the preferred transportation choice — some might say the lesser of two poisons, but clearly the lower risk option — for shipping increased volumes of oil through our traditional territories. But only if this is done respectfully, with the appropriate regulatory oversight," he added.

The Paul Band has "seen this highly-respectful approach taken by Trans Mountain and wish them well as they continue to go through the regulatory approval process."

Kinder Morgan intends to file its application with the National Energy Board for the expansion of its existing 300,000 barrels per day pipeline shortly, with a two-year review process to follow. Construction of the new line alongside the existing pipeline would take place between 2016 and 2017, with the additional 590,000 barrels per day in service during 2017.