



Imperial Oil Kearl's tailings leak Joint Statement



KOW & EDC - February 9th, 2023

Statement from Indigenous and environmental experts on Imperial Oil's tailings pond 5.3 million litre leak

Treaty 8 (Fort McMurray) – On February 4th, 5.3 million litres leaked from Imperial Oil's tailing "pond," enough to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools in a single incident. The tar sands' tailings "ponds" now contain over 1.4 trillion litres of toxic waste and [cover an area more than two times the size](#) of the city of Vancouver.

Quotes:

"Indigenous communities have known about tailings leaking for years, and nothing has been done despite numerous complaints and incidents. The Alberta and Federal governments have turned a blind eye to the oil industry in the oil sands for forty-five years, allowing disasters like this to happen. This leak is a wake-up call and must lead to much more active and ambitious efforts to make industry pay for the destruction they cause." **Jesse Cardinal, Executive Director, Keepers of the Water**

"Governments have been negligent by allowing tailings growth to continue. There are nineteen toxic tailings "ponds," each of which pose an immense danger to human and ecological health. The Imperial Oil leak adds to the mountain of evidence that the toxic tailings "ponds" are unsafe for nearby Indigenous communities and biodiversity. Oil sands operators are irresponsibly managing their dangerous waste. Governments need to step in immediately to prevent any more chemicals from reaching the environment and must ensure companies are cleaning up the tailings." **Aliénor Rougeot, Climate and Energy Program Manager, Environmental Defence**

Additional information:

- The Alberta Energy Regulator [issued an order](#) on February 6th to Imperial Oil, Canada's 3rd largest oil sands producer, in response to two incidents in which wastewater from toxic tailings leaked into the environment.
- The second incident is that the same facility has been leaking from another area since May.
- In 2020, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, an environmental agency created under NAFTA, [confirmed](#) the tar sands tailings ponds were leaking toxic chemicals into groundwater and that these leaks are a violation of Canada's *Fisheries Act*.

About ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE (environmentaldefence.ca): Environmental Defence is a leading Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, industry and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities.

About KEEPERS OF THE WATER (keepersofthewater.ca): Keepers of the Water are First Nations, Métis, Inuit, environmental groups, concerned citizens, and communities working together for the protection of water, air, land, and all living things within the Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin.

-30-

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Paula Gray, Environmental Defence, media@environmentaldefence.ca

Jesse Cardinal, Keepers of the Water, ed@keepersofthewater.ca