

**Minutes on the Oil (or Tar) Sands**  
**approved by Canadian Yearly Meeting, August 2009**

57. **CFSC: KAIROS Tar Sands**: Jane Orion Smith, CFSC General Secretary, introduced the draft minute on the tar sands by reviewing the history of CFSC's involvement with the issue. She summarized the very great amount of natural resources required to produce oil from the tar sands, and showed us images of the tar sands development. She explained the vast scope of the area which is under lease or under proposal for lease. Jane Orion flagged the main environmental issues, including concerns about loss of water quality, habitat and the release of toxic waste into the environment. We asked for revisions in the minute and it will return later in the agenda.

A letter outlining this minute will be sent to the governments of Canada, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and to government bodies in the United States and Europe.

72. **CFSC: KAIROS Tar Sands**: At CYM 2008, CFSC brought forward the question of appointing a Quaker representative to serve on a KAIROS delegation to the Athabasca tar sands being coordinated as a part of KAIROS' work on energy and sustainability. CYM agreed to participate and Dana Bush, a reclamation biologist from Calgary MM, was appointed by Representative Meeting in November 2008 as our representative. The delegation visited the region in May 2009, their focus being to meet with a wide range of groups that are involved in, impacted by, or concerned about tar sands development. Their goal was to listen and learn. They met with indigenous communities, settled communities in the tar sands area, local and provincial government representatives, industry, environmentalists, unions, and faith communities.

Our delegate, Dana Bush, has prepared a report with a range of thoughts for CYM to consider. We receive it with gratitude and also convey our thanks to KAIROS for enabling this opportunity and undertaking this work with its member churches. At CYM 2009, CFSC convened a special interest group where Friends heard a presentation by KAIROS staff member Ed Bianchi who described the first hand witness of the tar sands devastation. Dana's in-depth report on her observations and recommendations is available from CFSC and is on their website (see News and Events).

A central recommendation in Dana's report is considering a moratorium on new land leases. While Friends still need to consider a clear position on tar sands development, it is clear that the degradation of the land, water, social structures and well-being of all life in the region requires, at minimum, a pause. Tar sands underlie 140,000 square kilometers of boreal forest, and 78,000 square kilometers are already developed or leased with insufficient environmental assessment. To paraphrase Dana's report, the pace of tar sands development has exceeded our ability to address technical issues, infrastructure needs, health impacts, and stabilized employment.

We are deeply concerned about the impacts of tar sands development, present and future. As a first step, we support CFSC and Dana Bush preparing a letter for signature by the Clerks of CYM and CFSC to the Governments of Canada, Alberta, and Saskatchewan expressing the need for a suspension of new leases on land for tar sands development. We are recommending this moratorium given the known impacts and potential impacts of tar sands development. There is a need for much deeper consideration of the immediate and long term consequences of this activity. Are there not less damaging ways to meet our energy needs (including reducing them)?

We also call on these governments to appoint an independent body to conduct a comprehensive study of the impact of the tar sands on the health of those who live nearby and work in the region.

We ask that additional letters expressing our concern be written by CFSC to the governments of countries that access, or hope to access, fossil fuel developed from the tar sands, such as the United States, as well as countries that might exert influence on the governments in Canada on this issue, particularly those with a concern for the rights of indigenous peoples.

We also ask CFSC:

- (1) to work with QEAN in helping take back Dana's report to Monthly Meetings for consideration and response so that we are better able to articulate Friends' views on this issue as this concern moves forward within KAIROS and potentially among Friends;
- (2) to also consider how tar sands development factors into the conceptualization of "peaceful energy" as work on that concern continues, and;
- (3) to explore, perhaps in association with KAIROS, the resource trade implications imposed by NAFTA in relation to the tar sands.

We ask CFSC to bring forward a report based on their consultation with Monthly Meetings to CYM in 2010.

We thank Ed Bianchi of KAIROS, who was a participant on the delegation, for coming to CYM to engage with Friends in a Special Interest Group about the tar sands.