Dear Senators,

I am writing to express my support for the swift passage of Bill C-69, an overhaul of Canada’s environmental assessment legislation that Wilderness Committee has long advocated. I am also requesting to appear before this committee, either via teleconference or in person should you seek input in Vancouver.

I will focus less on the merits of the bill itself than the process by which it comes before this committee. Wilderness Committee has significant concerns about Bill C-69, that it only applies to “major” projects and that mandatory timelines could prevent thorough review or consultation. We’ve criticized the bill because it weighs environmental concerns against economic considerations.

However, we believe it is a balanced compromise based on extensive input over two years from Indigenous, environmental and industry groups and the broader public. Wilderness Committee and its members took part in this cross-country process and found it a meaningful way to convey our concerns.

Most importantly, we believe the industry-led campaign to stall or weaken the bill is not in good faith. It is about industry not being happy with the outcome of a process in which they participated, and circumventing the elected representatives of the Canadian public who wrote a new regulatory framework for significant projects. Oil and gas companies are using their immense lobbying power to stall this legislation so it will not become law before the federal election. It is anti-democratic and of far greater concern than potential outstanding questions about the bill.

Wilderness Committee has been living with the consequences of the broken regulatory process introduced by the former government in 2012. Its failure to offer a meaningful, legitimate review of the Trans Mountain pipeline is one of the reasons we and so many of our supporters continue to staunchly oppose the project. Canadians need to be able to trust their governments to make informed decisions on projects with enormous consequences for the environment, the economy and Indigenous communities. We cannot afford to leave the existing assessment framework unchanged.

We support Bill C-69 because it delivers meaningful public engagement and greater transparency in decision-making. It also provides consideration and clarity on all environmental, social, economic and health impacts of a project. Finally, it leaves final authority with cabinet so governments can be held accountable for the decisions they make. It is not perfect but it is far preferable for all parties than the existing regulatory regime. We hope future governments will continue to strengthen Canada’s review process even after it passes.

I therefore urge you to pass Bill C-69 as soon as possible and welcome any further opportunities for input on the legislation.
Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter McCartney, Climate Campaigner, Wilderness Committee