Attn:  Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources  
The Senate of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada, K1A 0A4

To all those whom it concerns,

Canada needs stronger environmental laws - ones that protect our health, our water and climate, as well as ecosystems and endangered species. As the IPCC 1.5°C special report and the Lancet Countdown 2018 report clearly show, delaying climate action means more devastating natural catastrophes and threats to Canadian’s health. Even newer reports show concurrent threats, including those from the changing arctic, the degradation of Earth’s natural spaces and the fact that Canada faces warming at twice the global rate. Bill C-69 offers the chance to respond to this emergency by more closely aligning energy and industrial project review with Canada’s efforts to safeguard our environment, address climate change and meet strengthened Paris Accord commitments. Toronto350.org encourages Senate to pass Bill C-69 now, as the House of Commons has already done.

Over the past two years, during the NEB modernization process, industry, Indigenous people, scientists and other concerned citizens made well-considered comments and submissions — many of which expressed concern about how climate change is accommodated in project reviews. The NEB Expert Panel carefully summarized the comments gathered from across the country and put forward recommendations. Toronto350.org urges you to not let the current self-interested effort of the oil and gas industry disrupt this progress and override the thoughtful and participatory work already completed. Moving forward with Bill C-69 is necessary to restore public trust and address the most pressing aspects of public interest today (and for decades to come) — climate change and the protection of our ecosystems.

Toronto350.org recognizes the improvements Bill C-69 provides over the current weak, outdated laws. These improvements include having one expert agency review projects and allowing more citizen participation. Introducing the consideration of a project’s contribution to Canada’s climate targets, recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples and adding sustainability, social and health outcomes to the scope of project reviews, are crucial steps in the right direction.

Toronto350.org asks that these and similar changes in the bill not be weakened. We need transparent, independent, science-based reviews that allow public participation throughout and incorporate Indigenous knowledge. Our health, safety and environment - including those of local communities and vulnerable populations - need to hold real weight when decisions are made. In fact, projects should not be approved if they fail a thorough climate test (including economic scenarios consistent with a decarbonizing world that keeps global warming below 1.5°C), interfere with Canada’s climate action, threaten our ecology or species at risk, or violate Indigenous rights.

Bill C-69 offers a critical chance to improve Canada’s environmental laws, energy review and regulation process and if we maintain the positive momentum it initiates, we can work to protect our land, air, water and climate as well as build good, forward-thinking projects that further Canada’s progress toward a net-zero emissions economy. Toronto350.org asks that you pass Bill C-69 and take this opportunity to protect our environment, our children and grandchildren and the economy!

Sincerely,

Toronto350.org Members