

B.C. NDP says Andrew Weaver's position on a Kitimat oil refinery means the Greens have sold out

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Spencer Chandra Herbert, NDP MLA for Vancouver-West End, questions the environmental merits of refining Alberta's heavy crude in B.C.

The B.C. NDP's environment critic has come out swinging against the Greens.

According to Spencer Chandra Herbert, the B.C. Green Party has apparently sold out.

On Thursday (February 6), the Vancouver-West End MLA called the Straightin response to a statement made by Green representative Andrew Weaver regarding the "merit" of an oil refinery planned for Kitimat that would process Alberta crude.

It just seems like the Green Party is selling out," Chandra Herbert said in a telephone interview.

He acknowledged that the "value-added proposition" in the oil refinery project hatched by newspaper publisher David Black is a "good one".

However, the New Democrat said he doesn't see how laying a pipeline like Enbridge Inc.'s Northern Gateway to feed a refinery makes sense.

If the Green Party's argument has been, as ours has been, as the B.C. Liberal government has been, if you can even respond to an oil spill or a leak from a pipeline along much of that route, how could you support a refinery at the end of it? Chandra Herbert asked.

He described that as the "flaw in Andrew's argument".

"It's like, 'We don't support the pipeline, but we support the refinery at the end'. Well, are you going to airlift the oil? It doesn't work," Chandra Herbert said.

"I don't see how you can have it both ways," he continued. "You can't claim to support a refinery, but then be against how you get the oil to that refinery."

In comments that were not included in the [story](#) that appeared in this week's, Weaver said that "B.C. Greens have agreed and accepted the five conditions of the B.C. Liberal government" for the construction and operation of oil pipelines in the province.

As outlined by the provincial government in July 2012, these conditions include the completion of an environmental review process, a world-leading marine oil spill response, top of the line practices for land oil spill prevention, respect for aboriginal rights, and for B.C. to get a "fair share" of the economic benefits of a "heavy oil project".

“We have added a sixth condition,” Weaver said.

And that is there should be no transport of diluted bitumen both on land, which means through a pipeline, and coastal waters.

What he’s suggesting is processing bitumen in Alberta into a lighter form – synthetic crude – before it is piped to B.C.

The MLA for Oak Bay-Gordon Head went on to say that that synthetic crude should be further processed by an oil refinery in Kitimat to produce gasoline and other end products.

According to Weaver, the environmental risks posed by shipping gasoline and diesel are less compared to a spill of diluted bitumen at sea.

He noted that putting gasoline on ships and barges is being done “anyway now”, for example, in meeting the fuel needs of Vancouver Island.

“So it’s not as if that’s not going on all over the world,” Weaver said. “It’s just the heavy stuff that’s a real problem.”