

Push to close Line 5 puts Mich. at risk

BY BRIAN CALLEY

Small businesses are getting squeezed from every direction. After facing some of the longest pandemic-related closures and restrictions, the hits just keep coming with workforce shortages, supply chain disruptions and rising costs.

Rising costs impact small businesses more than big businesses because smaller businesses tend to have less pricing power as buyers and sellers. People often say that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. That is true, but we need our government to start acting like it.

High energy costs are a huge part of the equation and Line 5 plays a vital role in our economy. From the energy many homes and businesses rely on, to the thousands of products we use every day that are a result of the pipeline, Line 5 is engrained in what we do in Michigan.

According to a study recently conducted by the Consumer Energy Alliance, closure of Line 5 would cost Michigan families and businesses an extra \$1.8 to \$2.2 billion for gasoline and diesel each year. That is unacceptable under any circumstances, but especially now with inflation reaching 40-year highs.

The extremist push to stop a safe energy infrastructure project is actually an extremist push to make you pay more at the pump. Remember that the next time you fill up the tank.

That's why calls to shut down the pipeline and halt the plan to build the Great Lakes Tunnel are so misguided. The tunnel plan makes a safe pipeline even safer, protects us from even higher energy costs and Michigan taxpayers won't have to pay for the tunnel.

The law approving the Great Lakes Tunnel was enacted in 2018 and construction should have begun by now, were it not for stall tactics from regulators.

The Michigan Public Service Commission should have approved the application for the tunnel this summer, but instead asked for information about the project that has been available for years.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is taking steps forward and has finally begun the process to complete an environmental impact study. The public comment process for this is now underway. The bottom line is that the permits need to be advanced and approved quickly so the Great Lakes Tunnel project can advance.

Tourism and our Great Lakes are critical to Michigan, and so is the success of our small businesses which rely on Line 5 and the Great Lakes Tunnel. They can all coexist peacefully, and scare tactics saying otherwise are the worst of politics.

Most importantly, those who are against Line 5 and call for its shutdown are missing one key point. There is no feasible alternative to transport the energy and resources it provides to our people, homes and small businesses.

It would take more than 2,000 trucks to transport what Line 5 carries each day. That's a wildly unrealistic number given the severe shortages and challenges we face with our supply chain systems — let alone the wear and tear to our infrastructure to make it happen.

It's not practical or feasible to shut down infrastructure we so heavily rely on. Michigan needs Line 5, and the Great Lakes Tunnel will make it even safer for us all. It's time to stop spreading misinformation and move the Great Lakes Tunnel project forward. It's what's best for all Michigan residents.

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