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Talking Trump

Worry expressed over normalization of bigotry; industry boost could positively affect economy

Kassina Ryder
Northern News Services
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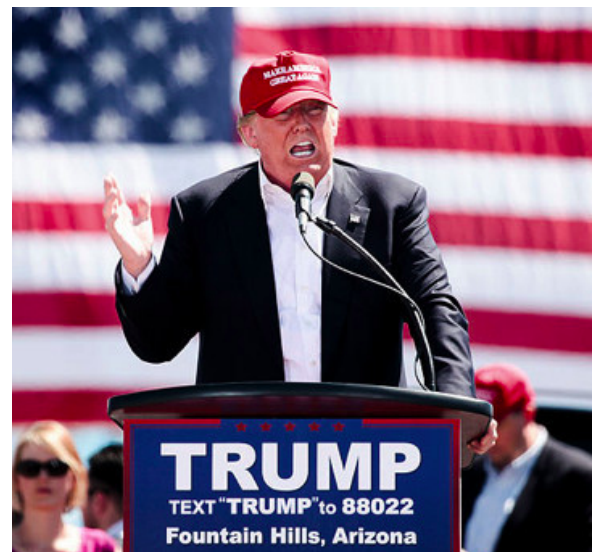
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

It's early to tell exactly what Donald Trump's presidency will mean for development in the NWT but one expert says it could make or break the oil and gas sector.

Republican Trump's plans to open federal lands in the U.S. to development could make Northern natural gas and oil exploration less appealing, Doug Matthews, former director of the GNWT's minerals, oil and gas division, stated in an e-mail to News/North.

"The success of fracking coupled with increasing technical changes and cost controls will provide the lower 48 with a competitive advantage over distant, high-cost Northern reserves that are often challenged by local opposition," Matthews said. "This, in turn, will make Northern exploration less attractive to American explorers."

However, Trump is a proponent of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would move crude oil from Hardisty, Alta. to Nebraska.



On Nov. 8, voters in the United States elected Donald Trump, shown speaking at a rally in March, as their next president. - photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/Gage Skidmore

President Barack Obama denied a presidential permit for the project in November 2015.

Matthews said Trump approving Keystone XL could make northern oil and gas more tempting to developers.

"If Mr. Trump moves ahead with KXL, we could see more oil flow from Alberta into the lower 48 to the benefit of possible Northern oil then being able to flow into Alberta," he said. "KXL, along with either TransMountain or Energy East, would provide new markets for Canadian oil and Northern oil might then become more attractive to the market."

If Trump supports Arctic drilling in the U.S., it could also pave the way for drilling in the Canadian Beaufort Sea, Matthews also said.

However, Trump's stance on climate change is concerning, he added.

Trump, who has said he doesn't believe in global warming, has committed to renegotiating or pulling out of global climate change agreements.

"If Mr. Trump succeeds in moving the U.S. away from the Kyoto Agreement, we could then see other countries throw in the towel on the issue to the detriment of the North, an area generally known to be the most impacted by climate change," Matthews said.

"That is not an outcome to be wished."

Trump particularly wants to pull out of the Paris Agreement, which aims to gradually decrease the use of fossil fuels and end greenhouse gas emissions this century.

Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus said legislation could prevent Trump from acting on some of his plans.

"The good thing is that there are laws that have to be followed when a leader gets in office, there is a constitution and that needs to be followed," he said. "There are rules."

Erasmus said he and other leaders had hoped Hillary Clinton would win the presidency for the Democratic Party.

Clinton had committed to a government-to-government relationship with indigenous people in the U.S., as well as resolving land-claims issues.

She also vowed that the federal Department of the Interior and Environmental Protection Agency would work with indigenous groups to protect land and water.

Protests taking place in Standing Rock, N.D. exemplify not only the importance of working with indigenous people, but also recognizing how decisions made nationally can impact the world, Erasmus said.

"The situation happening in Standing Rock, that's a global question. I say that because all of that fossil fuel development is connected to the rest of the world economy," he said.

"You gotta make decisions that make sense at home, but also make sense globally because the countries and the economies are all attached to one another."

The election of Trump as the next president of the United States has prompted reflection on potential impacts on the North, especially regarding social progress.

Lyda Fuller, executive director of the Yellowknife YWCA, said Trump's treatment of women is appalling and not what the organization that runs a domestic violence shelter wants any girls or woman to be subjected to.

"He has represented himself as a xenophobic racist and misogynist man who attains power and privilege with little or no intention of using these to improve the well-being of people whom he perceives as different and therefore undeserving," she stated in an e-mail to News/North.

Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green said she's "very disappointed" that people didn't awake Oct. 9 to a female president-elect who could be a effective positive role model for women.

She said the territory has struggled to get women into elected office and had hoped a female presidency would prompt more women to put their names on ballots.

Robert C. McLeod, the territory's deputy premier, said Canada and the North will wait to see how Trump actually deals with trade and climate issues once in office.

"It's going to make for some interesting times," McLeod said. "Our hope is he would honour commitments that were made by the previous administration."

- with files from Shane Magee



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