

Premier Stephen McNeil  
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June 18, 2014

Dear Premier McNeil:

On May 1, the Council of Canadian Academies (CCA) released its long-awaited report *Environmental Impacts of Shale Gas Extraction in Canada*. The panel, made up of 14 internationally recognized scientists and experts, raised a host of grave concerns including well leaks, the safety of fracking chemicals and cumulative impacts. The gaps in our understanding about fracking are putting communities at risk. Regardless of outcomes and recommendations from the ongoing Wheeler review, given the findings outlined in the CCA report, we urge you to place a ban on fracking in Nova Scotia.

In September 2011, former Environment Minister Peter Kent tasked the CCA to address the following questions:

*What is the state of knowledge of potential environmental impacts from the exploration, extraction, and development of Canada's shale gas resources, and what is the state of knowledge of associated mitigation options?*

The 260-page report pointed out critical information gaps in our understanding of fracking in a number of areas including:

- Leaks from incompletely sealed wells
- Chemical migration underground
- The fate of the chemicals in the flowback
- Well deterioration and impacts of leaks on groundwater and of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere
- Cumulative environmental impacts
- Hydrogeology particularly the links between groundwater and surface water
- The ability of geological formations to receive large volumes wastewater being injected underground
- Safety of fracking chemicals including how they react under high temperature and pressure

The Council of Canadians does not believe that fracking can be done safely for a number of reasons. The report outlined concerns about well leaks as a “long-recognized yet unresolved problem” and warned, “The greatest threat to groundwater is gas leakage from wells for which even existing best practices cannot assure long-term prevention.” The panel also notes, “In Quebec, a study found that a large proportion of wells (18 out of the 29 shale gas wells drilled to date) leak, although some leaked at almost imperceptible rates; however, all of these wells were less than three years old when tested (BAPE, 2011b).” We also know that as wells age, leakage rates increase. The risk to water sources and increases in greenhouse gases is not one we cannot afford to take.

Many communities have made repeated calls for a ban on fracking. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Council of Canadians set up a mock fracking rig on Parliament Hill and staged a mock fracking wastewater spill to highlight the risks associated with fracking. We also delivered 16,000 signed petitions to NDP MP Francois Choquette, Green Party MP Bruce Hyer and NDP MP Megan Leslie from people across Canada calling for a ban.

It is important to point out that the panel determined that shale gas development poses greater risks than conventional oil and gas development because of the diverse and toxic chemicals used in fracking, that shale gas development occurs in rural and suburban areas that rely on groundwater, and the repetitive nature of fracking.

Despite industry and government claims that fracking creates new jobs, we have not seen rigorous assessments of how many direct, long-term jobs have been created from fracking projects across the provinces. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ (CCPA) report *Enbridge Pipedreams and Nightmares* notes that Enbridge boasts that an oil and gas project like the \$5 billion Northern Gateway Pipeline would create 63,000 person-years of employment during its construction phase, and 1,146 full-time jobs once completed. However, CCPA reveals these estimates are overblown and that it would only create approximately 1,850 construction jobs per year for three years, and a handful of permanent new jobs once completed. The report points out that between 3 and 34 times the number of direct jobs would be created if the \$5 billion were invested in green industries such as education, health care, waste management and remediation services. Blue Green Canada’s report, *More Bang for Our Buck*, found that for every two jobs created in oil and gas, fifteen jobs could be created in clean energy.

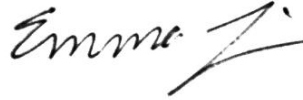
Support for a ban on fracking in Atlantic Canada is mounting with Newfoundland and Labrador declaring a temporary ban in November, Prince Edward Island’s Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry recommending a moratorium on high volume hydraulic fracturing, and the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities’ passing a resolution supporting a province-wide moratorium on hydraulic fracturing.

Despite the fracking boom in some provinces, the CCA report makes clear that we do not know enough about key aspects of fracking like well leaks, the safety of fracking chemicals and cumulative impacts. Fracking is not safe and poses risks to water sources, climate change and public health. Given the risks outlined in the CCA report, we urge you to place a ban on fracking in the province.

Sincerely,



Angela Giles  
Atlantic regional organizer



Emma Lui  
National water campaigner