Fracking Across Canada

In this section you will find an overview of where fracking is happening in Canada and what communities are doing to stop it. You will also find resources for more information, and contact information for groups that are working to stop fracking.
**British Columbia**

Home to what's known as the world's largest frack, British Columbia has shale gas reserves in the Horn River, Montney, Liard and Cordova basins, which are all located in the northeast corner of the province. Media reports state that: “In B.C. alone, 7,300 wells have been fractured since 2005, and between 500 and a 1,000 new ones are being permitted each year.” The frequency of fracking in the province is unparalleled. Over the course of 111 days in 2010, the world's largest frack took place at Two Island Lake in the Horn River Basin. According to Ben Parfitt’s report *Fractured Lines*, there were 274 consecutive “stimulations” or fracks, with an average of 17 fracks per well using 5.6 million barrels of water, 111 million pounds of sand and unknown quantities of toxic chemicals.

The Canadian Society for Unconventional Resources estimates that B.C.’s three largest shale basins hold up to 1,000 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.4

According to Eoin Madden of B.C.’s Wilderness Committee, “There are currently permits in B.C. gifting the gas industry 60 million gallons of our freshwater – from 540 of our precious creeks, rivers and lakes – every single day. To put this amount into perspective, that's twice the amount the city of Victoria uses on a daily basis.”

Even though the Horn River and Montney regions experienced terrible droughts in recent years, industry is ramping up to expand fracking in the province. There are currently 10 proposals for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants in the Kitimat-Prince Rupert region. These terminals would condense gas, turning it into liquid form so that it can be put on tankers and exported. This means there must also be pipelines built to get the gas to these LNG plants, one of them being the Pacific Trail Pipeline (PTP) which runs from Summit Lake to Kitimat on almost the same route as the Northern Gateway Pipeline.

The PTP is a fracking pipeline that would transport fracked gas from northeastern B.C. to LNG plants on the Pacific coast. The provincially-approved fracking pipeline could blaze a trail for further pipeline development by clear-cutting forest and creating infrastructure for other proposals such as Kinder Morgan’s alternative northern route for their Trans Mountain pipeline, Spectra Energy, and others.

Allowing fracking and LNG industries to expand will have unprecedented impacts on water sources and on the province’s greenhouse gas emissions. Studies already show that fracked natural gas can produce as much greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as coal. Madden warns that at least eight times as much energy would be required by the energy industry than is currently provided by BC Hydro should these LNG plants go ahead, and the increase in GHGs from burning gas to run the facilities will “destroy B.C.'s position as a climate leader.”

4 www.bcbusiness.ca/natural-resources/a-guide-to-bcs-shale-gas-boom
While these projects may appear isolated and separate, they are actually connected and make up what Fractured Land filmmakers call “Canada’s carbon corridor.” The proposed Site C dam – a dam that would flood prime farmland in the Peace River region – would fuel fracking in northeastern B.C. Fracking in northeastern B.C. and existing and proposed pipelines would be used to fuel the Alberta tar sands.

The B.C. government is considering 20 water licence applications in the Fort Nelson area. Neither the B.C. nor the federal government will conduct environmental assessments on these applications.

The Harper government’s 2012 omnibudget bills gutted the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, resulting in the cancellation of 3,000 project reviews across the country. One cancelled review was for an application from energy company Encana that requested permission to withdraw 10 million litres of water per day – roughly the same amount of water used by 30,000 people – from Fort Nelson River for its fracking project. The project will seriously impact the river, which is the

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
www.policyalternatives.ca/multimedia/fracking-bc

The Council of Canadians B.C.-Yukon Regional Office
www.canadians.org/fracking

Don’t Frack BC campaign
www.facebook.com/DontFrackBc
@DontFrackBC

Sierra Club B.C.
www.sierraclub.bc.ca

Wet’suwet’en mobilizing Unist’ot’en Action Camp
unistotencamp.wordpress.com

Wilderness Committee
www.wildernesscommittee.org/fracking
In January 2013, thousands attended the Vancouver Enbridge Noise Demo organized by Rising Tide and supported by 50 organizations. Photo by Caelie Frampton.

Fort Nelson First Nation’s (FNFN) lifeline. The community has fervently opposed the project. In 2012, both the B.C. Assembly of First Nations and the Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs passed resolutions supporting FNFN’s call for a moratorium on all water licences for fracking in FNFN’s traditional territories until full regional baseline studies are completed, culturally significant land and water resources are protected, and other requirements are met.

In November 2013, Sierra Club B.C. and the Wilderness Committee, represented by Ecojustice, launched a lawsuit against the B.C. Oil and Gas Commission and Encana. They are arguing that the commission’s repeated short-term water approvals violate the province’s Water Act.

**RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS**

B.C. Oil and Gas Commission – Issues permits for water takings for fracking  
www.bcogc.ca

B.C. Assembly of First Nations resolution  
www.bcafn.ca/files/documents/06k-2012BCAFNresolutionshalegaswater.pdf

The Carbon Corridor and fracking in B.C.  
www.commonsensecanadian.ca/category/energy-2/fracking-2

FracFocus: Fracking Chemical Registry  
www.fracfocus.ca

Oil and gas laws  
www.bcogc.ca/legislation

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs resolution  
www.ubcic.bc.ca/files/PDF/2012November_ChefsCouncil_Resolutions.pdf
Yukon

Community opposition to fracking was spurred by an application submitted by the Chinese company Northern Cross for an environmental assessment in 2010. There is currently no fracking in the Yukon, but Northern Cross has been conducting 3D seismic testing.

The Council of Yukon First Nations, an organization of 14 First Nations, unanimously passed a resolution in July 2013 declaring traditional territories “frack-free.” Shortly after, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation voted to ban fracking until it could be proven safe. Kaska First Nation has also come out against fracking. Even some businesses in the tourism industry are opposed to fracking.

The Yukon legislature has created an all-party committee on hydraulic fracturing and will be holding public consultations on the issue followed by a report in spring 2014.

The Yukon government recently endorsed Yukon Energy Corporation’s move to “invest in the electricity supply option of Liquefied Natural Gas to replace some of its aging diesel generators.” Once this infrastructure is in place, a steady supply of (fracked) natural gas would be required.5

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5 www.yukonconservation.org/energy_climate_change.htm

The shale basins in the Yukon include the Liard Basin and the Eagle Plain Basin in northern Yukon. There are coal methane reserves in the Bonnet Plume Basin and Whitehorse Trough.6 A temporary moratorium on shale gas development was implemented in the Whitehorse Trough in 2012.

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5 www.yukonconservation.org/energy_climate_change.htm

6 www.emr.gov.yk.ca/oilandgas/exploration.html#Yukons_Unconventional/Resources

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RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Energy, Mines and Resources
www.emr.gov.yk.ca

Yukon Water Board - Issues water approvals
www.yukonwaterboard.ca

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolution
www.vgfn.ca/ga-2013.php

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GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)
cpawsyukon.org

The Council of Canadians Whitehorse Chapter
www.canadians.org/fracking

Yukoners Concerned about Oil and Gas Development

Yukon Conservation Society
www.yukonconservation.org

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Five Finger Rapids, in the Whitehorse Trough.
The Northwest Territories

The Canol shale formation of the Sahtu Region in the central Mackenzie Valley is believed to be one of the largest potential sources of oil shale on the continent, with estimates of recoverable oil by fracking of between three and five billion barrels. Drawing comparisons to the prolific Bakken Basin that straddles the U.S.-Canada border, major oil and gas corporations, including Imperial Oil, Shell, ConocoPhillips, MGM Energy and Husky, have invested $628 million since 2011 to lease 15 parcels in the central Mackenzie Valley for potential fracking projects. In July 2013, the federal government announced an additional 10 parcels of land would be available for lease. There is also potential for fracking in the southwest corner of the Northwest Territories (NWT) in the Fort Liard area.

In November 2012, an application by MGM Energy and Shell Canada for a land use permit and water licence for exploratory horizontal fracking was withdrawn by the company. The application was referred instead to the environmental assessment process.

In June 2013, the Sahtu Land and Water Board (SLWB) gave ConocoPhillips the green light to drill two exploratory horizontal fracking wells near Tulita, granting a land use permit and a water licence for the fracks without requiring an environmental assessment. The National Energy Board approved this project on October 31, 2013 and fracking is expected to begin in the

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Government of NWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment
www.iti.gov.nt.ca

Sahtu Land and Water Board
www.slwb.com

Northwest Territories legislation (oil and gas activities regulated by the National Energy Board)
www.neb-one.gc.ca/clf-nsi/rpblctn/ctsndrgltn/ctsndrgltn-eng.html

Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act
www.neb-one.gc.ca/clf-nsi/rpblctn/ctsndrgltn/rgltnsndgdlnsprtsntttthrc/cndlndgsprtnsct/cndlndgsprtnsct-eng.html

Canada Petroleum Resources Act
www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/stat/rsc-1985-c-36-2nd-supp/latest/

Canada Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations
bit.ly/1sTcxNj

Dene Nation resolution
www.denation.com/Motions%20DLM.html

A Fractivist’s Toolkit 11

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

The Council of Canadians Northwest Territories Chapter
www.cocnwt.ca

Dene Nation
www.denation.com

Ecology North
www.ecologynorth.ca
The winter of 2013-2014. This is the first horizontal fracking project permitted in the NWT.

While some people in the Sahtu see oil and gas development as a promising source of revenue and jobs for the NWT, many are concerned about the impacts of fracking. The Dene Nation is concerned about pollution caused by fracking and opposes the process. In 2011, the Dene Nation passed a resolution calling for a moratorium until further research is conducted and proper regulatory requirements and safeguards are in place.

Water is a highly valued resource in the NWT. In 2006 the NWT became the only Canadian province or territory to declare water a fundamental human right.

Companies and government agencies are exploring the mining of silica sand deposits in two areas of the NWT to use in the fracking process. This further increases environmental disturbances and risks to public health and safety from fracking operations. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Department of Labor have also issued alerts that silica sand causes lung cancer, tuberculosis and silicosis, a lung disease affecting a person’s ability to breathe.

Representatives of the NWT government and Aboriginal government took a tour of the Bakken formation in Saskatchewan and North Dakota in October 2013. However, the lessons learned from this major fracking development have not yet affected public policy with respect to the Canol shale formation.

In June 2013, Canada and the NWT signed a devolution agreement that will transfer administrative control of public land, water and resources to the territorial local government. The agreement takes effect April 1, 2014, but maintains legislative control in Ottawa. This transfer will result in non-renewable resources revenues being split as follows: federal government: 44 per cent; NWT government: 33 per cent; Aboriginal governments (seven “regions”): 23 per cent. However, given that federally-proposed amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act will consolidate greater federal legislative control over non-renewable resource development in the NWT, it is not clear whether devolution will increase territorial authority over these resources.

The NWT government has committed to releasing a draft set of horizontal hydraulic fracturing guidelines for public review in the fall of 2013, but this timeline may be extended.
Alberta

Fracking for shale gas, oil and coal bed methane are new industries to Alberta, although the province is more advanced than other areas in Canada. While industry representatives like to point out that fracking has occurred for 50 years in the province – the Alberta Energy regulator states that 171,000 wells have been fractured since the 1950s – multi-stage, horizontal fracking presents new challenges.

According to the Alberta Geological Survey (AGS), there are 15 prospective shale gas formations in the province. The AGS estimates that five of these formations (Duvernay, Muskwa, Basal Banff/Exshaw, North Nordegg, and the Wilrich) may contain up to 1,291 trillion cubic feet (TcF) of shale gas. Alberta Energy reports that the province could contain an additional 500 TcF of coalbed methane (CBM). CBM, like tight and shale gas, is an unconventional gas. CBM wells can be drilled horizontally and fracking is often used to access gas trapped in coal seams. CBM typically uses less fracking fluid than shale gas since wells are not as deep. But because fracking occurs close to the surface, there is greater risk for contaminating drinking water supplies. Alberta’s Energy Resources Conservation Board acknowledged that Crew Energy and GasFrac Energy Services contaminated water sources by fracking the water table in Grande Prairie in September 2011.

The first commercial CBM well was drilled in 2001. According to an Albertan Environment webpage, “Over 17,000 CBM wells have been drilled or re-completed in the province as of March 2010 since coalbed methane production commenced several years ago. However, only a portion of these wells have recorded some production.”

Horizontal drilling and multi-stage fracking have also resulted in a conventional oil boom with an increase of 14 per cent in production from 2011 to 2012. For example, fracking in Cochrane and Goldenkey Oil’s proposed project for Lethbridge – which, if approved, could begin in early 2014 – are for oil. There are also estimates of 423.6 billion barrels of shale oil in the province.

The proposed Lethbridge project is about 70 kilometres away from a fracking fight involving members of the Blood (or Kainai) First Nation, Murphy Oil and Bowood Energy. In 2010, the Blood Reserve’s Chief and Council signed a $50 million deal with the energy companies. But there wasn’t agreement on the deal as many in the community opposed it. Three Indigenous women – Lois Frank, Elle-Maija Apiniskim Tailfeathers and Jill Crop Eared – were arrested when they blocked fracking trucks from accessing their land. More than one year later charges against the women were stayed.

Farmers and landowners are up in arms over the impact fracking is having on their drinking water, crops and farms. Landowner Jessica Ernst launched a lawsuit against Encana, Alberta Environment and the Energy Resources Conservation Board over contamination of her well water. In October 2013, an Alberta Court ruled that the Alberta Energy Regulator is immune to private legal claims. Ernst vowed to appeal the ruling and will continue her lawsuit against Encana.
There are a growing number of stories from landowners of the impacts fracking is having on drinking water as well as their dairy and cattle farms. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties passed Resolution 2-13S in the spring of 2013 citing concerns about the impact fracking has on drinking water, changes in land formations, and increased seismic activity. The association called on the Alberta government to report on the impacts of seismic activity, require mapping of all aquifers, and “protect surface and groundwater supply by imposing a minimum wellbore casing depth below aquifer zones.”

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8 albertavoices.ca

Saskatchewan

Fracking in Saskatchewan is almost exclusively done for the extraction of the province’s oil reserves. Most fracking in Saskatchewan is concentrated in the Bakken oil play, which straddles the United States-Canada border in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, southwest Manitoba, and the southeast portion of Saskatchewan. It is estimated that the Bakken holds 200-300 billion barrels of oil, with a potential 1.3 billion barrels that could be extracted in the Saskatchewan portion of the play. As a result, the area has seen double-digit growth in expenditures in recent years. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers estimates there were 3,028 active wells in the Bakken as of January 2013 producing 69,000 barrels per day (bpd), up from 760 bpd in 2004. The largest producer in the Bakken, Crescent Point Resources Partnership, operates more than 1,000 wells in the play and has announced $1.35 billion in capital development for 2013.

Saskatchewan Deputy Minister of Energy and Resources Kent Campbell claims that over the past 50 years, fracking has been in the province, although the widespread use of multi-stage horizontal fracking is a more recent development. Almost half of this fracking activity has happened since 2000, with Ministry of Economy statistics

Map courtesy of Emily Eaton and Heather Kindermann, University of Regina
revealing that 8,739 new wells were fracked in Saskatchewan from 2000-2005, 7,685 from 2005-2010, and 434 since 2010. Documents obtained from the Ministry of Economy reveal that there are close to 3,200 horizontal wells in the province.

**GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING**

The Council of Canadians Prairies-NWT Regional Office  [www.canadians.org/fracking](http://www.canadians.org/fracking)

Saskatchewan Against Fracking [www.facebook.com/SaskatchewanAgainstFrackingSaf](http://www.facebook.com/SaskatchewanAgainstFrackingSaf)

Saskatchewan Eco Network [www.econet.ca](http://www.econet.ca)

Saskatchewan Environmental Society [www.environmentalsociety.ca](http://www.environmentalsociety.ca)

**RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS**


Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy [economy.gov.sk.ca](http://economy.gov.sk.ca/)

Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment [www.environment.gov.sk.ca](http://www.environment.gov.sk.ca)

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**Manitoba**

Fracking for oil in the province is confined to a small corner in southwestern Manitoba. Yet the number of fracking operations has skyrocketed in recent years. Since 2006, 1,978 horizontal wells have been drilled, most of which use hydraulic fracturing. According to year-end weekly activity reports [www.manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/wwar/index.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/wwar/index.html).
that most of the 3,600 active oil wells in the province use fracking.

Despite the prevalence of fracking for oil in southwestern Manitoba, there is little public information on the chemicals and the amount of water used in the fracking process. The Manitoba government is working on new regulations for the fracking industry, and exploring the development of a FracFocus website for Manitoba – a database that exists for B.C. and Alberta where companies volunteer information about fracking chemicals and water use. A similar database for Manitoba could be up and running by 2014. However, companies should be legally required to disclose this information in order for the website to be truly effective.

The Winnipeg Free Press also reported that exploration for shale in Manitoba is underway with the potential for major industry expansion within the next 10 years. The potential shale formation runs from the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border to Treheme, and includes the Manitoba Escarpment, Swan Valley, the Porcupine Hills and around Riding Mountain.

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Drilling and Production Regulations
www.manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/actsregs/drlprodregs.pdf

Environmental protection plan required by section 104(1) Oil and Gas Act
web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/0034e.php

Manitobans own mineral rights to the land
www.manitoba.ca/iem/mrd/board/srboard.html

Petroleum development
www.manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/index.html

Pending applications
www.manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/applications/index.html

Well Applications
www.manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/wwar/index.html

Public registry for Environmental Approvals
www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/eal/registries/index.html

Water Stewardship Division - Issue water approvals. A Water Rights Licence is required for use of surface water and groundwater if use exceeds 25,000 litres per day and can be issued for up to 20 years.
www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/licensing/wlb/obtaining.html

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

The Council of Canadians Prairies-NWT Regional Office
www.canadians.org/fracking

Green Action Centre
greenactioncentre.ca

Manitoba Wildlands
manitobawildlands.org/gov_rc33.htm

Wilderness Committee
wildernesscommittee.org/manitoba
Ontario

The province’s shale gas reserves are located in southern Ontario. In 2010, Ontario’s Ministry of Natural Resources released an aerial survey of shale formations in the province to assist gas companies in exploration.

The Ontario Geological Survey (OGS), part of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, released a report in November 2012 highlighting the shale gas potential in the Ordovician Shale formations in southern Ontario. In this second survey program, the OGS drilled in 11 locations, including the areas of St. Joseph, Little Current, Wiarton, Bruce, Chatham, Port Stanley, Halton, Mount Forest, Pickering and Russell. The 2012 report highlights certain formations of the Ordovician shales – particularly the Rouge River Member of the Blue Mountain Formation and the Collingwood Member of the Cobourg Formation – as having “the best potential for shale gas productive units.”

Ontario borders four of the five Great Lakes. Developing these shale formations could have serious implications on the waters of Georgian Bay, the Great Lakes as well as local watersheds. (See p. 31 for more on fracking in the Great Lakes Basin).

Alberta-based oil company Mooncor Oil & Gas has leased more than 12,000 acres of land in this area, and Dundee Energy Limited (formerly Eurogas) boasts of having the “largest accumulation of oil and gas producing assets in Ontario.”

Former Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said the province wouldn’t allow fracking unless it was safe. Representatives of Ontario’s natural resources and environment ministries stated that “the public interest warrants a review” and have committed to conducting a review. 11

Even though there are currently no immediate plans for fracking in Ontario, the Great Lakes are still being threatened by fracked gas from the Marcellus and Utica shales. Union Gas and Enbridge are trying to convince the Ontario Energy Board of the need for new and expanded natural gas infrastructure in the Greater Toronto Area and throughout the province. The companies are proposing that expanding this infrastructure will diversify supply, lower upstream risks and reduce supply costs. The approval could open the door to more fracking of the Marcellus shale, which would pose serious risks to the Great Lakes Basin with massive water withdrawals, potential water contamination, pipeline leaks and hazardous waste risks. Upstate New York already imports and disposes of radioactive fracking waste from Marcellus shale projects in Pennsylvania, putting local watersheds, Lake Ontario and the Great Lakes Basin at risk.

11 www.thestar.com/business/economy/2013/01/30/ontario_will_review_fracking_rules.html
Quebec

In May 2013 Quebec’s Environment Minister tabled Bill 37, which, if passed, would see a moratorium on fracking in the Lowlands of the St. Lawrence River for up to five years. The proposed legislation would revoke all drilling licences in the area and prohibit new ones. The legislation also includes fines of up to $6 million for companies that attempt shale gas exploration. The Parti Québécois minority government needs opposition support for the legislation to pass. The Quebec government also held a consultation process to obtain public input on major energy issues facing Quebec in the fall of 2013.

While opposition parties are withholding support for the bill, many feel the bill would not go far enough as it would not apply to all of Quebec. For example, the proposed legislation would not stop shale oil exploration in the less densely populated Anticosti Island.

Bill 37 follows years of opposition to fracking in Quebec. In 2008 there was a burst of exploration activity in the St. Lawrence River Lowlands for the Utica shale formation, with 31 wells fracked.¹² This kindled significant local outrage and opposition, with dozens of municipalities passing resolutions banning fracking in their communities. The Bureau d’audiences publiques sur l’environnement held hearings on fracking, which were well attended and controversial. The hearings resulted in a strategic environmental assessment on shale gas. Forced to respond, the then-Liberal Quebec government declared a provincial moratorium on fracking in 2012 until further study could be conducted. The environmental assessment is ongoing, and is expected to conclude in 2014.

FREE TRADE IS FRACTURING WITH OUR FUTURE

Energy firm Lone Pine Resources is using investor rights provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to challenge Quebec’s 2011 moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for natural gas. Lone Pine says the moratorium upsets its right to profit from oil and gas mining in the St. Lawrence Valley, and is asking for $250 million in compensation.

This case proves that trade and investment deals such as NAFTA, the proposed Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), and Canada’s many Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (FIPAs), undermine our basic democracy, threaten needed environmental regulations, and put private profits above the public good. Communities, not private firms, should have the final say on fracking and other projects that threaten water sources, the environment and public health – and there should be no penalty for saying “no.”

READ MORE:

Factsheet: Free trade is fracturing with our future
www.canadians.org/content/free-trade-fracking-out-future

Fracking is not a right: Tell Lone Pine to drop its NAFTA lawsuit against Quebec’s moratorium on fracking!
www.canadians.org/action/petition/index.php

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Maps of Oil and Gas Licences in Force
www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca/english/energy/oil-gas/oil-gas-potential.jsp

Ministry of Natural Resources
www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca/english/home.jsp

Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment, Wildlife and Parks for water approvals
www.mddefp.gouv.qc.ca/eau/redevance/reglement-en.htm

Public consultation on energy
consultationenergie.gouv.qc.ca/english/

Québec Strategic Environmental Assessment on Shale Gas
eeas-gazdeschiste.gouv.qc.ca/en/

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

Alternatives www.alternatives.ca

L’Association québécoise de lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique (AQLPA)
www.aqlpa.com

Campaign for a complete moratorium of at least twenty years of fracking exploration and exploitation in Québec: Moratoire d’une génération
moratoiredunegeneration.ca

Coalition of local groups opposing fracking - Regroupement Interrégional Gaz de Schiste de la Vallée du St-Laurent
www.regroupementgazdeschiste.com

Collectif scientifique sur la question du gaz de schiste au Québec
collectif-scientifique-gaz-de-schiste.com

The Council of Canadians Ontario-Quebec-Nunavut Regional Office
www.canadians.org/fracking

Eau Secours eausecours.org

Mobilisation gaz de schiste de Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu
mobilisationgazdeschiste.blogspot.ca

Québec

A Fractivist’s Toolkit
Nova Scotia

In early 2011, the Nova Scotia government announced it would be reviewing hydraulic fracturing. The review process would determine “potential environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing in onshore petroleum exploration.”

The review was extended in April 2012 for an additional two years, in part to allow for other reviews to take place and for more information to be gathered. The provincial government would not consider or approve any new applications during the review period, which is expected to be complete in the summer of 2014.

In August 2013, groups celebrated the Nova Scotia government’s announcement that it would cancel the current review of fracking and replace it with a more comprehensive and independent review that would include public consultations and an advisory panel of experts who would examine the social, economic, environmental and health impacts of fracking. Fracking has, in the past, been allowed in Nova Scotia. In 2007 in the Kennetcook and Noel regions in Hants County, Triangle Petroleum Resources was issued several fracking and water extraction permits. The lack of information related to this project, and concerns that other projects may be permitted, gave rise to the coalition known as “NOFRAC” (Nova Scotia Fracking Resource and Action Coalition). Through access to information requests, NOFRAC pieced together information about fracking in Hants County and documented it in their report.

Out of Control: Nova Scotia’s experience with fracking for shale gas.

In 2010, the local chapter of the Council of Canadians began to raise concerns about the potential for fracking near Lake Ainslie, Nova Scotia’s largest freshwater lake. PetroWorth Resources, now known as First Sahara Energy Inc., had been granted permission to drill an exploratory oil well beside the lake. Many individuals and groups joined the fight and the campaign “Protect Lake Ainslie” got underway. The Margaree Environmental Association appealed the Environment Minister’s decision to grant the exploration permit. Unfortunately, this appeal was dismissed. In September 2012, the Mi’kmaq Warriors Society and other Indigenous communities set up a partial blockade on the Canso Causeway to highlight their concerns with the dangers of fracking. The Council’s Inverness County Chapter continued to advocate for an anti-fracking bylaw and due to intense community pressure, Inverness County Council passed the bylaw banning fracking in Canada in May 2013. PetroWorth never began drilling and the company’s lease expired on July 15, 2013.

Colchester County also waded into the fracking debate when Atlantic Industrial Services (AIS) applied for a permit to release what they claimed to be “treated” fracking wastewater into the County’s wastewater sewage system in Debert. AIS has been receiving fracking waste from projects in New Brunswick as well as the

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15 nofrac.wordpress.com/nofrac-reports/issue-paper-2/
exploration wells in Nova Scotia. The fracking wastewater would have been released into the Chiganois River, impacting communities near Cobequid Bay and the Bay of Fundy. Colchester’s Sewer Use Appeal Committee ultimately rejected the permit, stating that it was not the municipality’s role “to allow the Bay of Fundy to be the petri dish for fracking wastewater.” AIS still has at least 8.9 million litres of fracking wastewater from the Nova Scotia fracking operations alone. Windsor, Nova Scotia has accepted the same “treated” fracking waste, and allowed 7 million litres of fracking wastewater containing radioactive elements to be discharged through Windsor’s sewage system that connects to the Minas Basin. There is another request on the table from AIS to treat and discharge more fracking wastewater.

The Nova Scotia government must consult with the public about how to safely dispose of the existing fracking wastewater and implement a ban on fracking in the province so that no further fracking wastewater is produced.

Community opposition has played a major role in the efforts to protect communities from fracking in Lake Ainslie and Colchester County. Colchester County received 40 written submissions and heard multiple presentations during the public consultation process. Opposition is ramping up in Windsor now to stop the town from accepting fracking waste and discharging it in local waterways. In November 2013, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities passed a resolution supporting a province-wide moratorium on hydraulic fracturing and highlighting the problem of fracking wastewater in Nova Scotia. The newly elected Liberal government has passed a law banning the importation of fracking waste and has committed to upholding the moratorium and conducting the independent review.

16 www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2013/05/17/ns-debert-decision.html; www.colchester.ca/committee-decision; halifax.mediacoop.ca/author/ken-summers
Newfoundland and Labrador

On November 4, 2013, Minister of Natural Resources Derrick Dalley announced that the government would not be “accepting applications for onshore and onshore-to-offshore petroleum exploration using hydraulic fracturing,” which effectively created a temporary ban on fracking in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In March 2013, Shoal Point Energy Ltd. and Black Spruce Exploration Corp. had submitted a proposal to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) to perform onshore-to-offshore fracking for oil exploration in three sites along the west coast of Newfoundland. A month later, the C-NLOPB directed Shoal Point and Black Spruce to register their project with the province.

Black Spruce had negotiated a farm-in agreement for exploration with Shoal Point and will be responsible for any drilling program. Since the drilling is offshore-to-onshore, two approval bodies are involved: the C-NLOPB and the province. As of November 2013, no formal project proposal has been submitted to the province.

In the meantime, the C-NLOPB will run its assessment of the project in conjunction with the province.

Black Spruce now holds title to more than 280,000 hectares of land spanning three different licences along the west coast. In September 2012, Shoal Point Energy claimed that Green Point shale – the long and narrow stretch of shale rock along Western Newfoundland – is “one of the significant resources in North America.”

Shoal Point Energy’s consulting firm indicated that the shale is several times thicker than other formations, and has also been broken up a bit by shifting tectonic plates, making it more difficult to drill. Black Spruce Exploration has since announced it would like to see the west coast of Newfoundland transform into an oil industry with hundreds of wells along the coastline.

Opposition has been growing since the fall of 2012 when communities first learned about the project and the potential impacts of fracking on their communities. There are several groups along the coast concerned about fracking and a coalition of groups called “The Newfoundland and Labrador Fracking Awareness Network” was launched in the summer of 2013.

Concerns include negative impacts on the more than $1 billion tourism industry, the fisheries, as well as to human health and the environment. Newfoundland and Labrador currently has no regulations that deal specifically with fracking, and no facilities to manage fracking wastewater.

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18 www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/09/09/shoal-point-energy-shale_n_1868189.html

19 www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2013-08-01/article-3335217/Moderate-fracking-awareness-group-created/1
A lot of public concern is focused on one location, Sally’s Cove, which is located just north of Rocky Harbour and is fully encircled by Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Negative impacts due to construction and potential spills or leaks would impact Gros Morne directly. UNESCO has indicated it is concerned and wants to look over any environmental reviews before drilling starts to determine whether the park’s status as a heritage site might be in jeopardy.²⁰

UNESCO representatives have announced they will visit Gros Morne to gain a better understanding of the situation.

A group from the Port au Port region hosted a public presentation that included experts from both sides, including then Natural Resources Minister Tom Marshall. Close to 400 concerned citizens attended the presentation. Since then, the group – with the support of others – has toured the region to give educational presentations in small communities along the west coast of Newfoundland. The topic has been in the media since November 2012. Public pressure on the government through letters to the editor, as well as letters to the C-NLOPB and provincial politicians, prompted Minister Marshall to visit the regions that were fracking at the time in order to understand the science of it before the government announced a temporary ban in November 2013. The government committed to conducting an internal review of regulations in other jurisdictions and an assessment of the geological impacts in Western Newfoundland, which would be followed by public consultations.

The province-wide Fracking Awareness Network has called for a halt on all current fracking projects. The network is insisting on a comprehensive, independent, science-based review, including a human health impact analysis to fully understand the potential effects on the region. The network says this review should focus on protecting citizens and the environment.

New Brunswick

Tensions are mounting in New Brunswick as David Alward’s Conservative government pushes forward fracking projects in the province despite strong opposition from people and community groups that are pressing instead for a provincial ban or moratorium.

Arguing that fracking – or “shale gas development” as it’s known in the province – would create new jobs and boost the economy, Premier Alward and his government have been staunch industry supporters. In November 2013, the government announced a new royalty regime for natural gas extraction aimed at enticing industry to start new projects.

According to the province’s Environment Minister, New Brunswick has about 80 trillion cubic feet of shale, although it is unclear exactly how much gas is actually trapped in the rock.

There are about 30 gas wells operating in southern New Brunswick near Sussex. In many communities around the province, oil and gas companies have held licences to explore and leases to produce fracked oil and gas for years. Several of these companies have drilled test wells or conducted seismic testing.

Penobsquis, a small community in the south-west of the province, had its first non-conventional gas wells drilled in 2000 and 2001. Since then, many more rounds of seismic testing have occurred and several more wells have been drilled. There are currently 30 gas producing wells in Penobsquis. The community faces the dangerous combination of gas production and potash mining, which has led to numerous issues including wells drying up, health concerns, and homes and properties being damaged by the ground settling. Many people in the community have filed complaints with the province’s Mining Commissioner against PotashCorp, and are seeking compensation.21

More recently, seismic testing and well drilling are being carried out in communities along the shale formation, including in the Kent County area. Public opposition has been fierce and has led to a dramatic increase in awareness about shale gas development in the province and the Atlantic region.

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21 www.penobsquis.ca/concerned-citizens/
The protests in Kent County target SWN Resources, a Texas-based company doing exploratory seismic testing. SWN has a provincial licence that allows it to search for trapped gas across about 900,000 hectares of New Brunswick.

SWN is conducting the testing on unceded Mi’kmq lands of the Signigtog District. Members of the Elsipogtog First Nation have said “no” to testing and fracking on their land. After a peaceful blockade throughout the summer, the Elsipogtog and others who oppose shale gas development in the province made international headlines when RCMP officers with riot gear, assault rifles and snipers moved in on peaceful protesters. Most media coverage of the events ignored a key issue: that the Elsipogtog are standing up to protect their land, water and families from the harmful effects of fracking.

New Brunswick against fracking

Opposition to shale gas development has been growing since 2010, with the formation of 29 community groups across the province that work in coalition and on their own to educate people and try to put the brakes on this growing industry. Groups have lobbied provincial political parties, municipal governments and the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick, Indigenous leaders, and the office of the Ombudsman, and reached out to allies and potential allies about the various risks associated with fracking. In 2012, the New Brunswick government held public consultations on fracking and commissioned Dr. Louis Lapierre to facilitate and summarize them, as well as meetings with other stakeholders, in a report. Around the same time, Dr. Eilish Cleary, Chief Medical Officer of Health for New Brunswick, wrote a report reviewing the health implications and considerations related to shale gas development.

Dr. LaPierre’s report, titled *The Path Forward*, compiled data from both public and stakeholder meetings where the majority of participants were against fracking. His 38-page report summarized what issues were raised and then gave recommendations, based on “the economic importance and beneficial impact the shale gas industry.” His recommendations focused on how New Brunswickers and the industry could co-exist. Dr. Cleary completed her detailed 70-page report titled *Chief Medical Officer of Health’s Recommendations Concerning Shale Gas Development in New Brunswick* in September 2012. Her main conclusions identified the province’s lack of a comprehensive health risk assessment of fracking, and the lack of a framework for assessing public health risks on a project-by-project basis.

In May 2013, the New Brunswick government announced new regulations for the shale gas industry, which purportedly took into account the recommendations of both the Cleary and LaPierre reports (*The New Brunswick Oil and Natural Gas Blueprint, May 2013*). In fact, none of the Cleary recommendations are in the government plan, whereas LaPierre was named head of the Energy Institute he recommended.

Despite claims by Environment Minister Bruce Fitch that the focus of the government’s blueprint was on safeguarding air and water, and “to ensure that the industry can evolve in an environmentally safe manner,” few lands are protected from the possibility of fracking — not even wetlands.

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22 [www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Corporate/pdf/ShaleGas/en/ThePathForward.pdf](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Corporate/pdf/ShaleGas/en/ThePathForward.pdf)

23 [www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/HealthyEnvironments/Recommendations_ShaleGasDevelopment.pdf](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/HealthyEnvironments/Recommendations_ShaleGasDevelopment.pdf)

The New Brunswick government will likely continue to see ongoing protests against its pro-industry stance, which is at odds with many people in the province who say that fracking brings too many risks.

This image, by Fanny Aishaa, is a reimagination of an original photo by Ossie Michelin / APTN. The woman depicted is Amanda Polchies, protecting unceded Mi’kmaq land and water from fracking.

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

Ban Fracking NB
www.banfrackingnb.ca

Conservation Council of New Brunswick
www.conservationcouncil.ca

The Council of Canadians Fredericton Chapter
www.facebook.com/groups/196759017153089/

Elsipogtog Warrior Society
www.facebook.com/groups/265528243458534/

Know Shale Gas NB
noshalegasnb.ca

New Brunswick Anti-Shale Gas Alliance
nbasga.blogspot.ca/

New Brunswick Environmental Network Shale Gas Caucus

Sierra Club Atlantic
atlantic.sierraclub.ca

Upriver Environment Watch
upriverenvironmentwatch.com

Water and Environmental Protection for Albert County
protectalbertcounty.wordpress.com

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Ownership and Surface Access and Oil and Gas Legislation
www.gnb.ca/0078/minerals/ONG_Introduction-e.aspx

Water Supply Source Assessment Permit
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.201100.Water_Supply_Source_Assessment_Permit.html

Chief Medical Officer of Health’s Recommendations Concerning Shale Gas Development in New Brunswick
www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/HealthyEnvironments/Recommendations_ShaleGasDevelopment.pdf
Prince Edward Island

The province’s Department of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs regulates fracking in the province. As of November 2013, there are currently no fracking operations. However, some experts believe there is a potential of 7.6 trillion cubic feet of coal bed methane in the ground on P.E.I., meaning up to 40 per cent of the province could be exposed to fracking.

The process for issuing exploration rights in the province starts with a company petitioning the Minister of Energy. There is a competitive bidding process that can result in the Minister giving a permit for six years, with an extension period of up to two years. Once the permit is approved, the government has no control over what process of exploration or drilling (including fracking) the company uses. The company also needs agreement from the landowner.

There were a number of exploration permits for natural gas that expired in December 2012, and right now there are no active permits on the island. Companies that had permits included Corridor Resources Inc. and PetroWorth Resources. An exploratory fracked well near Green Gables in 200725 – one of six wells that have been fracked in the province – resulted in a broken pipeline in 2007. While the spill of radioactive material was small, it underscores the pipeline safety risks of fracking.

Residents in the province have joined together to form a diverse coalition under the banner “Don’t Frack PEI.” The coalition highlights the serious risks fracking poses to groundwater in the island province. Coalition members are engaging in a series of public meetings to raise awareness and build support for a province-wide ban on fracking. In response to a questionnaire sent to PEI’s Minister of Energy, the P.E.I. government promised to conduct public consultations if land is leased for exploration purposes. In November 2013, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Energy recommended a moratorium on high-volume hydraulic fracturing in the province.


GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

The Council of Canadians Atlantic Regional Office
www.canadians.org/fracking

Don’t Frack PEI
www.dontfrackpei.com

PEI Against Fracking
facebook.com/groups/224894730870301

Sierra Club Atlantic
atlantic.sierraclub.ca

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Department of Finance Energy and Municipal Affairs

Department of Environment, Labour and Justice - Issues water approvals

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Fracking Across Canada

The Canadian government and fracking

Regulation for fracking falls largely to the provinces because of their power to issue drilling and water permits. Although former federal Environment Minister Peter Kent has admitted to having the ability to stop fracking, the Canadian government has largely remained silent on the issue. However, the federal government has a responsibility to regulate fracking under the National Pollutant Release Inventory, as well as federal legislation such as the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act, and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

However, the Harper government’s omnibus budget bills, passed in 2012, weakened several pieces of environmental legislation, essentially greasing the wheels for the oil and gas industry to push through projects without federal oversight. In fact, access to information requests even showed that the scaling back of environmental legislation was made at the request of industry.²⁶

Changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act resulted in the cancellation of 3,000 project reviews across the country, some of which were fracking projects or applications related to fracking. One cancelled review was for an application from energy company Encana that requested permission to withdraw 10 million litres of water per day – roughly the same amount of water used by 30,000 people – from Fort Nelson River for its fracking project. The project will seriously impact the river, which the Fort Nelson First Nations depend on. It has been fervently opposed by the community.

Bill C-45, the second omnibus budget bill, abolished the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission (HMIRC) and transferred the commission’s responsibilities to the Minister of Health. The HMIRC was an independent agency that safeguarded worker safety by assessing compliance with the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. It played a key role in educating workers about health and safety risks, safe handling, proper storage, transportation and disposal of hazardous materials. The arms-length agency also reviewed requests from companies to keep chemical names and quantities as trade secrets. The Council of Canadians raised concerns about the impacts that abolishing the HMIRC would have on the disclosure of fracking chemicals.

The federal government must also regulate fracking under its obligation to uphold the human right to water and sanitation. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing the human right to water and sanitation. The UN Human Rights Council has also passed resolutions outlining governments’ obligations concerning the right to water and sanitation. This right is now enshrined in international law and all countries must ensure its implementation.

In the past, the Canadian government had consistently denied that the human right to water and sanitation even existed. But at the 2012 Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Minister Kent finally conceded that the human right to water not only exists, but that it is integral to the right to an adequate standard of living under the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Catarina de Albuquerque, the UN’s special rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, wrote to the human right to water during her visit to the United States in 2011. De Albuquerque's U.S. report notes the concerns raised about the impacts of fracking on water and recommends that countries need to take "a holistic consideration of the right to water by factoring it into policies having an impact on water availability."
quality, ranging from agriculture to chemical use in products to energy production activities."

Fracking projects are happening in Indigenous communities, some of which are already struggling with access to clean and safe drinking water. At any given time, there are more than 100 First Nation communities under water advisories due to poor water quality. The environmental assessments cancelled under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and the 99 per cent of lakes and rivers that are left unprotected under the new Navigation Protection Act, will only exacerbate violations of the human right to water.

The federal government has initiated federal reviews on fracking through Environment Canada and the Council of Canadian Academies. However, Environment Canada sent a heavily redacted and incomplete plan when the Council of Canadians submitted an access to information request to obtain details about the review. The document shows that Environment Canada’s review relies on industry information, which calls the integrity of the review’s results into question.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the Canadian government endorsed in 2010, requires that governments obtain “free, prior and informed consent” for projects impacting Indigenous lands and other resources, including water sources. Given that many fracking projects are happening in Indigenous communities, the federal government must ensure that it has the free, prior and informed consent of those Indigenous communities.

The federal government has a clear and pressing responsibility to intervene in fracking projects across the country. The impacts of fracking are already being seen, and will continue to be seen for many years to come.

The federal government needs to take a leadership role and ensure that our water sources, people’s health and the environment are protected from unnecessary and dangerous pollution.
Fracking Across Canada

The Great Lakes

In the United States there are eight states - Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York - that are either actively fracking, or considering it. The shale formations in the Great Lakes Basin are the Marcellus Shale, the Utica Shale, Collingwood Shale and the already-fracked Antrim Shale.

While there are no natural gas deposits in Wisconsin and Minnesota, both states are being mined for silica sand, which is formed by pieces of crystalline silica and is an ideal form of sand for fracking companies. However, mining for silica sand has raised concerns with residents because of the large amounts of water needed for the mining process and the health hazards caused by exposure to crystalline silica.

Despite strong opposition from groups and residents, Illinois recently gave the green light to restart fracking operations in June 2013 by passing new regulations. Fracking proponents have hailed Illinois’ regulations as “the strictest in the country.” Illinois will be the first U.S. state to require fracking companies to disclose chemicals used before and after the drilling process.

In Indiana, most of the fracking that has occurred has been in the southern part of the state with the exception of Steuben County in the northeastern corner of the state. Terre Haute recently banned fracking within city limits.

Michigan may soon become the state with the most fracking within the Great Lakes Basin. Encana has proposed withdrawing 15 billion litres of water from local watersheds in Kalkaska County in order to drill 500 new fracking wells in northern Michigan.

Ohio and Pennsylvania are Great Lakes states with a significant amount of fracking, but most of the fracking within these states occurs outside of the Great Lakes Basin.

New York State has had a de facto fracking moratorium for roughly five years. Governor Andrew Cuomo continues to delay making a decision on the matter, stating he is waiting for a decision from the state’s Health Commissioner, Dr. Nirav Shah. The movement to ban fracking in the state has gained a lot of momentum with frequent rallies, strong coalitions like New Yorkers Against Fracking, and celebrity endorsements from Sean Lennon and Mark Ruffalo.

While companies are prohibited from withdrawing water from the Great Lakes for fracking, companies like Encana are drawing groundwater that feed rivers in the Great Lakes Basin.

In Canada, Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas are petitioning the Ontario Energy Board for new and expanded natural gas infrastructure in the Greater Toronto Area.
If the application is approved, millions of people in Ontario will be relying on imported fracked gas from the U.S. Marcellus shale by 2015.

The approval could open the door to more fracking of the Marcellus shale posing serious risks to the Great Lakes Basin with massive water withdrawals, potential water contamination and pipeline leaks and hazardous waste risks.

A bill is before the Quebec legislature that – if passed – would result in a moratorium on fracking in the Lowlands of the St. Lawrence River for up to five years. While opposition parties are withholding their support, groups are still urging the Quebec government to pass a ban throughout the province. Even if the bill passed, it would not stop shale oil exploration in the less densely populated Anticosti Island at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Quebec is also at the centre of a $250 million NAFTA lawsuit launched by Lone Pone Resources a company whose permits in the St. Lawrence Valley were revoked in 2011.

(For more information see the Ontario and Quebec sections.)

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

- Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan
  letsbanfracking.org

- The Council of Canadians Ontario-Quebec-Nunavut Regional Office
  www.canadians.org/fracking

- Food & Water Watch
  www.foodandwaterwatch.org

- FLOW
  flowforwater.org

- Sierra Club Illinois
  illinois.sierraclub.org

- Southern Illinoisans Against Fracturing our Environment
  www.dontfractureillinois.net

(Also see list of groups in Ontario and Quebec.)

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

- Municipal resolutions in the Great Lakes states and the rest of the U.S.

- FLOW’s ordinance program
  flowforwater.org/programs/fracking/

- Food & Water Watch activist tools
  www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/fracking/fracking-action-center/activist-tools/

- Tribal and First Nations Great Lakes Water Accord

- Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative’s resolution on Shale Gas Exploration, Extraction and Treatment Activities and the Role of Local Government
  www.glslcities.org/annual-meetings/2012/2012%20GLSLCI%20Approved%20Resolutions.pdf

LIST OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS IN THE GREAT LAKES BASIN

- United Tribes of Michigan (no website)
- Union of Ontario Indians
  www.anishinabek.ca
- Chiefs of Ontario
  www.chiefs-of-ontario.org
- Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
  www.aiai.on.ca/about/about-us.aspx
- Southern First Nations Secretariat
  www.sfns.on.ca
Fracking internationally: Communities around the world call for fracking bans

Fracking is spreading like wildfire, not only in Canada, but also all over the world. Yet growing alongside the rapidly expanding industry is a grassroots movement to ban fracking and protect water sources, public health and the environment.

The United States has one of the largest shale gas reserves and is leading the fracking boom. Companies like Encana are breaking records with the amount of water used for fracking operations from the Great Lakes Basin.

In August 2013, Americans Against Fracking – a coalition of environmental and consumer organizations – delivered 650,000 public comments calling for a ban against fracking on public lands. In May 2012 Vermont became the first state to ban fracking. There have been local measures to stop fracking passed in 20 states, including California, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa have also instituted bans. New York State has been a hotbed of activity in the fight to ban fracking with frequent rallies and the creation of a 230 member coalition “New Yorkers Against Fracking.”

In Mexico, fracking is underway with a few exploration wells along the U.S. border. While the Mexican government controlled energy provision in the country for decades, in December 2013, it passed law reforms that encourage the participation of private companies. Fracking proponents often argue that without private sector participation, Mexico will not be able to take advantage of its shale gas reserves.

The Alianza Mexicana contra el Fracking was launched in August 2013, creating a coalition of 16 environmental, consumer and human rights organizations, including the Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project. The coalition is calling for a fracking ban.

In Europe, France and Bulgaria have banned fracking, while Ireland, the Czech Republic, Denmark and North Rhine-Westphalia state in Germany have implemented moratoriums. German brewers made international headlines this spring when they warned that fracking could harm the beer industry.

Romania’s government is reconsidering the future of fracking in the country. Romanians have held frequent and fervent protests against the practice, and Bulgarians crossed the border in June 2013 to join their neighbours in calling for a ban. Thousands have protested outside of government buildings. In October 2013, 600 farmers, joined by priests, formed a human chain and occupied a field that Chevron is trying to frack. Strong community opposition in Europe, coupled with the myth of a natural gas glut driving down prices in the U.S., has slowed shale gas development in some parts of Europe. Although Poland is estimated to have...
one of the largest unconventional gas reserves in Europe, gas companies have recently gotten cold feet, casting doubt on the future of fracking there.

Despite community protests, South Africa recently gave the green light to fracking companies by lifting a moratorium on fracking that had been in place since April 2011.

China has a high number of shale gas reserves and has moved full steam ahead with fracking. Concerns were raised recently when gas companies began fracking in Sichuan, an earthquake-prone province in southwestern China. The threats fracking poses to water and public health are compounded in China given the country’s existing water crisis. Nearly half of China’s rivers are so polluted they are unfit for drinking.

There is currently no fracking in the U.K. but companies are busy submitting applications for shale gas and coal bed methane projects. The British government suspended fracking after earthquakes linked to fracking made international headlines in 2011. The government has since lifted the moratorium and is readily approving applications. However, protesters have been successful in slowing down Cuadrilla Resources, a British company attempting to spearhead the shale gas and oil rush in the U.K. The company announced that it was withdrawing from two key sites in the fall of 2013 following a summer of legal challenges and fervent protests that included 1,000 people camping out at a Balcombe drilling site in West Sussex. Protesters are continuing to demand a ban on fracking and set up camp at the headquarters of West Sussex County Council in November 2013.

Communities around the world are joining a global call to ban fracking as part of the annual “Global Frackdown.” During the first Global Frackdown, which was held in September 2012, more than 200 community actions in more than 20 countries challenged fracking and its negative impacts on water, the environment and public health. The 2013 Global Frackdown, held on October 19, was an even bigger success with more than 250 actions in 30 countries. Communities around the world organized rallies, street theatre actions, and held meetings with politicians – all as part of the call for a global ban on fracking.