



by Emma Lui

Many Council of Canadians chapters took part in the first Global Frackdown in 2012. This year's event, happening in October, will see communities around the world speaking out against fracking.

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, 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. In

addition to having a state-wide moratorium, New York municipalities have passed more than 200 local resolutions against fracking, by far the most passed in any one state in the U.S.

In Mexico, fracking is underway with a few exploration wells along the U.S. border. While the Mexican government currently controls energy provision in the country, it has proposed energy 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, 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 head-

lines 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 to join their neighbours in calling for a ban. Strong community opposition, coupled with the myth of a natural gas glut driving down prices in the U.S., has cast doubt on shale gas development in 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.

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 last September, more than 200 community actions in more than 20 countries challenged fracking and its impact on water, the environment and public health. Communities around the world organized rallies, street theatre actions, and meetings with politicians – all to be a part of the call for a global ban on fracking.

This year's Global Frackdown took place on October 19. We hope you were a part of it!

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