

BC's Climate Goals, Hydro and Water Resources at Risk as Shale Gas Fracking Industry Expands

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

A new study concludes that BC's ballooning shale gas industry is the natural gas equivalent of Alberta's tar sands, placing the province's water and hydro resource at risk as well as jeopardizing climate change policies.

Despite industry and government assertions that natural gas from shale rock is a "green" alternative to other fossil fuels, the study released recently by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Wilderness Committee finds the opposite, and lays much of the blame on the controversial gas extraction technology known as hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking."

Fracking involves forcing massive amounts of water, chemicals and sand deep into shale rock formations, creating fractures in the rock that release the gas.

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of power that the proposed Site C dam would provide. In other words, large amounts of publicly owned clean water and hydro power will have to be found to produce more and more dirty fossil fuel. I don't think British Columbians are comfortable with that."

The study, *Fracking Up Our Water, Hydro Power and Climate: BC's Reckless Pursuit of Shale Gas*, notes many troubling outcomes of escalating shale gas production:

– A potential doubling of industry greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, as fracking activities escalate. If BC is to meet its legislated targets for greenhouse gas reduction,

every other sector of the provincial economy will have to cut their emissions in half.

– The BC government giving shale gas companies access to public water supplies for 20 years, with little or no public consultation despite the massive amounts of water used (up to 600 Olympic swimming pools per gas well pad).



Photo by Garth Lenz

A shale gas well pad is readied for fracking operations in BC's remote Horn River Basin north of Fort Nelson, where provincial government subsidies have helped pave the way for an unprecedented fossil fuel rush. [From *Fracking Up Our Water, Hydro Power and Climate* by Ben Parfitt]

- Potential increases in shale gas piped to Alberta, where it already helps to fuel operations at the tar sands.

The study further notes that environmental and climatic stresses associated with the industry will increase with new developments like the recently approved liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal at Kitimat.

“It’s time to curb this industry before it’s too late for our climate, our water and our hydroelectric resources,” says Tria Donaldson, Pacific Coast Campaigner for the Wilderness Committee. “We want firm no-go zones established where industry activities are restricted and we want a moratorium on fracking in undeveloped watersheds, pending full surface water and groundwater studies.”

The report makes numerous recommendations, including:

- A cap on annual shale gas production.
- An end to all government subsidies of the natural gas industry.
- A requirement that the province explain how BC will meet its legislatively mandated

greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets while simultaneously supporting the shale gas industry.

- Increased water prices for industry, to encourage innovation and conservation (currently companies pay nothing for the water they use, or nominal charges of just \$2.75 for each Olympic swimming pool of water).

- A requirement that the industry pay full cost for the electricity it uses.

“We need to manage this industry for wind-down, not wind-up, and ensure that while the industry is operating the public gets a fair return,” Parfitt says.

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