



National Farmers Union in New Brunswick - Union nationale des fermiers au Nouveau-Brunswick
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NFU-NB (Region 1, District 2) Submission to the NB Commission on Hydraulic Fracturing November 2015

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick is pleased to offer a submission to the NB Commission on Hydraulic Fracturing. Following the recommendation to place our submission within the context of five larger issues, our submission speaks mostly to the weakening of citizens' trust in traditional institutions. Given that most of the farming activity in NB takes place in rural areas, many of our members live near possible well sites. This submission is a compilation of resolutions passed by the NFU membership, excerpts from previous NFU submissions on hydraulic fracturing, and media releases the NFU published relating to fracking both in New Brunswick and across the country.

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick is an accredited general farm organization representing farm families from across the province. We are part of the National Farmers Union (NFU), which is a non-partisan, nation-wide democratic organization made up of thousands of farm families from across Canada who produce a wide variety of commodities, including grains, livestock, fruits and vegetables. The NFU was founded in 1969.

Our mandate is to work for policies designed to:

- raise net farm incomes from the marketplace;
- promote a food system that is built on a foundation of financially-viable family farms which produce high-quality, healthy, safe food;
- encourage environmentally-sensitive practices that will protect our precious soil, water and other natural resources; and
- promote social and economic justice for food producers and all citizens.

Family farmers are committed to a food system that provides safe and healthy food to people in this country and abroad. The NFU wants to ensure that Canada has the capacity to feed itself and that Canadians can democratically make decisions that support long-term economic, social and ecological sustainability in regard to our food system.



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Resolutions

The NFU is a membership driven organization and our policies are created by our members through resolutions passed regionally and nationally. With regards to hydraulic fracturing our membership both nationally and provincially have passed the following resolutions:

Whereas hydraulic fracturing - fracking is a process, and

Whereas millions of gallons of water and /or and hundreds of chemicals, many of which are toxic and /or carcinogenic, extract coal bed methane, shale oil, shale gas from many thousands of feet below the surface, and

Whereas the exploitation of mineral rights to use this process throughout Canada is increasing at an alarming rate, and Whereas fracking is known to contaminate ground and drinking water, as well as loss of 70% of the water used which is never recovered, and

Whereas, the contamination and quantities of chemicals used are considered proprietary trade secrets, and are not made public, can spill, air emissions affect local air quality, and federal and provincial governments have yet to establish regulations and safety standards to protect people and drinking water sources,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU lobby the federal and provincial governments to stop fracking projects immediately.

Resolution passed by membership at NFU National Convention. Nov 24 – 26, 2011, London, ON

Be it resolved that the National Farmers Union in NB urgently and vigorously pursue the NFU national resolution on hydraulic fracking with the NB government go beyond the national resolution and push for an immediate end to all exploration activities for shale gas.

Resolution passed at NFU-New Brunswick (Region 1, District 2) annual meeting. March 10, 2012, Woodstock, NB

Be it resolved that the National Farmers Union in NB move that a cost-benefit analysis be done by an objective third party before exploration for shale gas is permitted, including the impact upon water and air quality, road infrastructure, property devaluation and consequent property taxes, tourism, forestry and agriculture.

Resolution passed at NFU-New Brunswick (Region 1, District 2) annual meeting. March 10, 2012, Woodstock, NB



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Recommendations from the NFU submission to the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) Consultation in March 2013 (<http://www.nfu.ca/story/submission-ercb-fracking-regulation>)

Alberta farmers have had to coexist with fracking for decades. The following text is based on NFU member experiences in Alberta and is from an NFU submission to the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) Consultation in March 2013:

“The adverse impacts of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as fracking, include increases in noise, dust, light pollution, air pollution, traffic on and damage to country roads, damage to fields, loss of productive acres, interference with wildlife habitat, social impacts due to influx of transitory workers, loss of recreation opportunities, potential water shortages, chemical spills on farmland and into surface waters, and reduction in property values. The danger of irreversible contamination of groundwater and resulting loss of wells used for watering livestock, irrigating crops and domestic consumption is our most serious concern.

In many ways, fracking is not compatible with the safe, healthy production of wholesome food.”

As part of the same submission in 2013 the NFU offered the following recommendation:

- **The NFU recommends that the Precautionary Principle be the overarching principle that informs the regulations.**

The Precautionary Principle has been formally adopted by Canada in several international treaties, including the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, also known as the Rio Earth Summit. Principle #15 of the Rio Declaration, which Canada signed, states:

"In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." - Principle #15 of the Rio Declaration, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), 1992¹

The precautionary principle is so important in the face of both industry led science and regulations and the lack of public science or documentation on the safety of the process. In terms of industry-led regulations and science the NFU offers the following point of view:

¹ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, United Nations Environment Programme, June 1992. <http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?documentid=78&articleid=1163>



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Regulation is one of government's fundamental roles in modern states. The regulatory process is accountable to the government and the regulators are responsible to citizens. To maintain this foundation of good governance, the public regulator must have the ultimate responsibility for regulatory decisions.

The NFU is opposed to industry self-regulation. Unlike governments and regulators, the industry is not responsible to the public. It is driven by private financial goals. Self-regulation leads to a lack of transparency when key data is defined as "confidential business information". The consequences of failure due to a company's efforts to minimize costs and maximize profits would fall upon others.



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Recommendations from the NFU-PEI submission to the Development of the PEI Water Act in November 2015 (Full report: <http://www.nfu.ca/policy/submission-development-pei-water-act>)

One of the ten recommendations offered by the NFU-PEI in their submission to the Development of the PEI Water Act in November 2015 was to “incorporate into the [Water] Act a permanent ban on fracking” in order to protect the provinces watersheds and agriculture industry. The following text is one of the reasons for this permanent ban:

As a national farm organization, the NFU across the country is expressing concern about the bias in so called “believable science”. While acknowledging that every scientific study has a bias, identified in the statement of the research questions, our leaders/members across the country identify some disturbing realities which unfortunately (though they refer to actions of the past Federal Government) also affect approaches to research and therefore decisions in NB.

Ann Slater, NFU 1st Vice President (Policy) expresses some of our general concerns:

On a daily basis our federal government touts the need to make “science-based” decisions, while at the same time, it is quickly dismantling Canada's public research infrastructure and undermining the ability of our globally respected public scientists to do their research. World-renowned public libraries, like the Freshwater Institute library in Winnipeg, have been closed, with much of the invaluable materials kept there carted off to dumpsters, according to scientists who observed the closures.

The destruction of this critical environmental and cultural baseline data, which was gathered in the public interest with public funding, represents a tremendous loss of knowledge. This 'lost' information could potentially have helped us better understand how our climate is changing, how agricultural practices are affecting our water and our natural ecosystems, and whether various industrial and agricultural chemicals are accumulating in our ecosystems.

Today, any public funds that are available for scientific research are being handed over to private industry to support commercialization of those discoveries. The May 7, 2013 issue of the Globe and Mail, which covered the change in mandate of the National Research Council, stated: "The National Research Council, which gave the country canola and the atomic clock, will now be taking its scientific cues from Canadian industry as part of a makeover of the country's flagship research labs." Where is the public interest when the government proclaims it is making "science-based" decisions?



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Press Releases

Provincial Farm Organization Applauds Government Commitment to Promote Local Food, but Expresses Concern over Future Supply of Clean Water

(Rogersville, N.B., December 3, 2012)- Jean-Eudes Chiasson, President of the National Farmers Union in New Brunswick, has said he is very pleased with the provincial government's commitment to the value-added food sector and the promotion of local community food products, as stated in the throne speech read on Tuesday, November 27, in Fredericton.

Chiasson said, "Members of the NFU in NB applaud this initiative by our government to strengthen local food production and this public commitment to promote local community food products to residents, visitors and businesses. Our farm members look forward to the opportunity to work with the Premier, Minister Olscamp, and the DAAF staff to implement these promises."

However, Chiasson also points out that farmers rely on safe and abundant water to produce high quality food for public consumption. In light of the government's decision to proceed with development of the shale gas sector in the province, an industry which has been reported to have potential negative impacts on safe ground water supply, Chiasson expressed concern.

At their 2012, Annual General Meeting, members of the NFU in NB passed a resolution recommending that a cost-benefit analysis be done by an objective third party before exploration for shale gas be permitted in the province. NFU in NB Executive Director, Melanie Jellett, indicated that that the requested analysis "should include the impact upon water and air quality, road infrastructure, property devaluation and consequent property taxes, tourism, forestry and agriculture".

Chiasson said members of the NFU in NB believe that the government's expressed intention to proceed with development of an extractive industry such as shale gas runs counter to an investment in healthy communities and sustainable agriculture, since crop and livestock production depend heavily upon readily available clean water supplies.

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick is one of two accredited general farm organizations in NB. The NFU has represented farm families in all agricultural commodities across Canada for over forty years. Its members work together to achieve farm policies, which will ensure dignity and security of income for farmers, while enhancing the land for future generations.



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Provincial agricultural organization supports the Idle No More movement

January 9th, 2013

The National Farmers Union in NB supports the Idle No More movement and New Brunswick's aboriginal people in their struggle for environmental and social justice

In the last month and a half, members of the National Farmers Union in NB have been inspired by the courage of First Nations people in our province and across the country as they stand united against the oppressive Bill C-45 and the continued threat to Aboriginal treaties and rights.

Through road and rail blockades, rallies, flash mobs, ceremonies, fasts, and hunger strikes, those involved in Idle No More have shown determination, strength, and an unrelenting willingness to stand against a government that continues its colonial rule over an entire people.

The sheer sacrifice that individuals like Chief Theresa Spence are willing to make for what they feel is right and necessary inspires our members to continue our fight for a better, more just food system. We will continue working to ensure that family farmers make a decent wage, and that eaters can affordably benefit from our province's agricultural bounty and truly understand where and how their food is grown.

The National Farmers Union in NB acknowledges that Idle No More is not solely a First Nations' struggle, but one that seeks to protect our most precious resources: our water, earth, air, and people. As farmers we cannot work, grow, and produce without the assuredness that our government will act as protector of our land and water. Many of our members are developing farming practices that are more sustainable and better connected to the natural world. We are truly grateful for the leadership that First Nations people - the first farmers, fisher people, and hunters of this land - have taken in the public cry for environmental and social justice. We will continue to join forces with aboriginal people in their opposition to shale gas and we look forward to working in solidarity in the future. We call upon all New Brunswickers to learn more about Idle No More, the fight against Bill C-45, and the vision of a country where our forests, waters, land, and people live and produce in harmony.



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Precautionary Principle Should Guide New Fracking Regulations, says NFU

March 18, 2013

(Rimby, AB) – “There are serious gaps in the regulation of fracking in every jurisdiction, and Alberta is no exception,” said Jan Slomp, National Farmers Union Region 7 (Alberta) Board Member. “That is why we have recommended that the Energy Resources Conservation Board adopt the Precautionary Principle as its ultimate guiding principle.”

“This new technology is extremely powerful, and may well be unprecedented in the scope and duration of its impacts,” Slomp continued. “The ability of the industry itself to fully understand its implications is limited. Regulators must ensure that the first priority is to protect our land, water, air and soil. This is why we have submitted our recommendations to the ERCB.”

“As farmers, we bear the brunt of fracking’s impacts,” Slomp emphasized. “My family has to live with the noise, light, dust, traffic and gases emitted from fracking operations day after day. Fracking infrastructure has turned our fields into an obstacle course. We and our neighbours use wells for our own drinking water, for our livestock and to irrigate our produce. The threat of having them irreversibly polluted by fugitive fracking fluids hangs over our heads.”

“Farmers depend upon clean water in our lakes, streams and rivers as direct sources of water and also to recharge the underground aquifers. If spills or improper disposal of produced water contaminate these waters, our land is affected forever,” stated Doug Scott, NFU Board member and Waskatenau-area farmer. “If these water sources are depleted, it is we who will have to haul water for our farms – or leave. Worse, within decades the oil and gas will be gone, and the land and water could be spoiled forever by irresponsible and reckless fracking.”

“We look forward to seeing that improvements that will result from implementing public-interest recommendations such as ours to strengthen Alberta’s regulatory framework,” concluded Scott.



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Hydraulic Fracking a Danger to Water, Food, Farmland: NFU Calls For Moratorium

(Rimbey, Alberta, February 23, 2012) “Many farmers in my area who either have direct experience with the destructive nature of hydro-fracking technology on their water wells, or who have neighbours who have been affected have come to me with their concerns” says Jan Slomp, Rimbey area dairy farmer and Region 7 (Alberta) Coordinator for the National Farmers Union (NFU). “We are in the heart of Alberta’s oil and gas country where our ability to produce good, wholesome food is at risk of being compromised by the widespread, virtually unregulated use of this dangerous process.”

At NFU Region 7’s recent public meeting dozens of concerned farm families heard how their neighbours, the Campbell family from Crestomere, Alberta, had their water well contaminated by highly toxic compounds, which they clearly linked to the fracking of a nearby oil and gas well. Several other attendees then brought forward their stories of losing water wells to fracking near their own farms. “Not many of these stories get made public because the oil and gas companies usually force farmers to sign confidentiality agreements in return for replacement of their water wells” said Slomp.

Iain Aitken, an Alberta cattle rancher and local NFU member observed, “Farmers across Canada largely depend on ground water aquifers for both domestic use and livestock production. The quality of ground water is critical to raising high quality food. Unfortunately in the experience of too many Alberta farmers and ranchers hydraulic fracturing has been associated with water well contamination and damage. That is why our organization is calling for a moratorium on this technique until these problems can be addressed.”

Jan Slomp concluded “The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers have really acknowledged there are problems with fracking by releasing several useful suggestions for guidelines to prevent further problems. However these voluntary guidelines are no substitute for strong regulations enforced by an impartial government body. That is what is needed before we can support any resumption of fracking.”

The NFU represents thousands of family farms across Canada. At its 2011 annual convention members passed a landmark resolution calling for a moratorium on the use of hydraulic fracturing of sub-surface oil and gas formations.