

Fort Nelson First Nation to Discuss Massive Shale Gas Water Licenses Nov. 13 in Vancouver

Written by [Damien Gillis](#) Saturday, 10 November 2012
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Leaders of Fort Nelson First Nation from northeast BC are coming to Vancouver to share their concerns over 20 new long-term water withdrawal licenses the BC Liberal Government is considering issuing for shale gas operations in their traditional territory.

One such license alone - for which natural gas giant Encana is expecting imminent approval - would enable the company to dam and divert up to **3 BILLION litres a year** of fresh water from the Fort Nelson River, which is described by elders as the lifeblood of their territory and identified by the community as a cultural protection zone. Under the current Water Act, withdrawal licenses are valid for up to 40 years.

“We are extremely concerned about a massive giveaway of water from our rivers and lakes, without any credible process identifying what the long-term impacts will be on our land, our families and on our community” says Fort Nelson First Nation Chief, Sharleen Wildeman. The chief will lead a 10-person delegation of council members, elders and band staff to Vancouver Tuesday Nov. 13 to take their concerns to the media and public.

The public is invited to attend a town hall dialogue featuring Chief, Council and community members from Fort Nelson First Nation - **Tuesday evening at the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (800 E. Broadway). Doors open at 6:30 - event runs from 7-9:30 pm.**

The evening, which is co-hosted by Council of Canadians and the Wilderness Committee, will also feature a presentation by leading independent water and energy expert Ben Parfitt of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Encana's license application, which would involve constructing a 20-metre concrete barrier across the river, is just one of 20 similar applications throughout the region, which could ultimately represent over a trillion litres of fresh water being diverted to shale gas production in the long-term. According to community representatives, "The water will be permanently withdrawn and mixed with highly toxic chemicals for shale gas extraction. Ultimately the majority of the water will be disposed of via 'deep oilfield injection'."

They also point out that Fort Nelson First Nation has worked for years with the natural gas industry and government to provide economic opportunities for its members and the entire province through responsible resource development. But the plan to issue these water licenses has forced the community to draw a line in the sand. After pursuing every other avenue available to it - including repeated efforts to reach out to the Province, which have gone ignored - the community feels it must now appeal to the public for support to put a stop to this plan and ensure the public and First Nations are properly consulted in the development of a responsible water management plan.

They insist that plan must include a comprehensive suite of safeguards for water - such as adequate baseline studies, multi-year development plans submitted by industry, environmental and industry

monitoring, cumulative impacts assessment, and the ability to designate culturally significant land and water resources as off-limits to development.

To learn more on this important topic and find out how you can get involved, come be a part of the discussion with Fort Nelson First Nation and independent water and energy experts this **Tuesday evening at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House.**