

# B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting  
British Columbia's Community Water Supply Sources

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*News Release*

## The Big Squeeze: North American Regulator and Protective Agency Close Controversial Groundwater Contamination Cases

*Vancouver* – Within the span of 6 days, from June 14 - 20, 2013, an intriguing and significant chain of events occurred in Canada and the United States concerning governmental investigations and studies of groundwater contamination from fracking (hydraulic fracturing). The Province of Alberta's energy regulator, the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB), and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), both suddenly announced they were terminating ongoing investigations of groundwater contamination. In the middle of this muddle, the EPA shocked the American citizenry announcing that the agency was delaying its comprehensive study of fracking – ongoing since 2010 – by two more years.

- On **June 13**, Alberta-based Environmental consultant Jessica Ernst's catalogue of case studies on North American groundwater contamination from fracking is submitted to the United Kingdom Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment, Oil & Gas Licensing.
- On **June 14**, the ERCB shut down an 8-year long investigation into a groundwater contamination case on the Campbell's property, a rural Alberta cattle ranch. Gas migration from fracking contaminated the Campbell's drinking water.
- On **June 15**, Encana, one of Canada's largest energy corporations, failed to meet a deadline in filing its Statement of Defence to Alberta Chief Justice Wittmann in the Ernst Versus Encana court case, Canada's first legal case on groundwater contamination from fracking. (To date, Encana has not yet filed)
- On **June 17**, the BC Tap Water Alliance press release on Jessica Ernst's catalogue of North American groundwater contamination from fracking was posted throughout the world.
- On **June 18**, the EPA announced a two year delay of its critical and comprehensive study on fracking, which is to include an assessment of groundwater contamination.
- On **June 20**, the EPA suddenly announced that it was pulling out of its four-year old Pavillion, Wyoming water contamination investigation, and that the State of Wyoming would take charge. Canadian-based Encana Corporation, under investigation by the EPA for groundwater contamination at Pavillion, announced that it will contribute \$1.5 million to the investigation.

ProPublica reported in a July 3, 2013 on-line article, *EPA's Abandoned Wyoming Fracking Study One Retreat of Many*, that "high-ranking [EPA] agency officials acknowledge that fierce pressure from the drilling industry and its powerful allies on Capitol Hill – as well as financial constraints and a delicate balance sought by the White House – is squelching their ability to scrutinize not only the effects of oil and gas drilling, but other environmental protections as well." Similar pressures

and untoward alliance with the energy sector guide the administration of Alberta's energy regulator and the Canadian government.

“Big oil and gas have strategically squeezed North American governments to thwart and cover up cumulative pollution and toxic crimes by silencing scientific investigations on their thousands of above-ground and below-ground experimental fracking sites,” notes Will Koop, B.C. Tap Water Alliance Coordinator. “The international strategic thrust of the industry’s big squeeze on forensic science emanates from a deep originating fear and vulnerability from liability suits and the linked threat of excommunication from industry’s top underwriting insurance companies. By the added ability of energy corporations to hide and seal untold hundreds of groundwater contamination and related cases through confidentiality / non-disclosure agreements with landowners, North Americans continue to face a grim and Orwellian future.”

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### **The Science is Deafening Industry’s Contamination Everywhere Regulator and Protective Agencies Run for Cover**

Date (2013)

- **June 13** - [EES Gas Migration paper](#) submitted to [UK Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment](#), Oil and Gas Licensing
- **June 14** - [ERCB closes the Campbell’s \(Alberta ranchers\) drinking water contamination investigation](#) after 8 years of investigation \*
- **June 15** - [Encana misses their promised deadline to file Statement of Defence](#) on the [Ernst vs Encana](#) case after being served April 2011
- **June 16** - [BC Tap Water Alliance](#), [FrackingCanada](#) and [Ami\(s\) du Richelieu](#) broadcast the [EES Gas Migration paper](#) globally
- **June 17** - [EES Gas Migration paper](#) submitted to [Council of Canadian Academies expert panel](#) reviewing fracking; [report due soon](#)
- **June 18** - [US EPA announces 2 year delay](#) of comprehensive frack study
- **June 20** - [US EPA pulls out of Pavillion water contamination investigation](#) after 4 years; [Encana takes over](#) with \$1.5 million donation
- **June 24** - [Duke Study #2 on drilling and fracking causing methane contamination of groundwater](#) published online, affirms Study #1. Duke Study #1 reported 17 times more methane in groundwater near drilled and fracked wells, [published online May 9, 2011](#).

EES = Ernst Environmental Services

\* On November 16, 2006, the Alberta regulator wrote that the Campbell’s well water was the “*only affected water in Alberta.*”