

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Email – info@bctwa.org

Website – www.bctwa.org

Stop Fracking British Columbia - www.bctwa.org/FrackingBC.html



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News Release

WESTERN CANADIAN ENERGY MINISTRIES “COLLABORATE” IN SECRET WITH INFLUENTIAL PETROLEUM CARTEL ON DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROVERSIAL FRACKING POLICES

Vancouver - Through top-down deregulatory and environmental streamlining directives under the recently formed *New West Partnership*, the British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan Ministries of Energy (for oil and gas) held four or more secret meetings since July 2011 to develop “joint action on issues related to unconventional shale gas development” concerning “water issues”. In a leaked August 3, 2011 Alberta Minister’s Briefing Note and a directive document called *New West Partnership Collaboration and Information Sharing, Industry Water Use and Hydraulic Fracture Technology Project Charter* (see attached backgrounder documents), the B.C. Ministry of Energy was designated the **lead agency** for the internal “working group” meetings. According to a complaint by the Alberta Federation of Labour, the in-house meetings of government officials included what appears to be un-registered lobbyists with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP). Participation from all other “external” stakeholders was excluded. The internal Minister Briefing Notes for B.C. and Saskatchewan have not as yet surfaced.

In addition to controversial deep shale gas policy directives about the withdrawal, use, toxic pollution and disposal of enormous volumes of fresh water sources (amidst other critical environmental and pollution issues related to fracking), the Alberta Briefing Note describes how the “water and technology collaboration working group” also advised the government to develop “proactive” tax-payer funded public relations schemes “within government and industry in Alberta and across Canada” for “better environmental outcomes” in the “rapid development” of shale gas fracking development. Stated in the *Project Charter*, the proposal to “enhance communication of stakeholders and the public with consistent water use messages” is apparently based on “**misinformation** in the public media and communities facing shale gas development pressure” and “**environmental ENGOs supporting a ill-informed campaign on hydraulic fracturing and water related issues in British Columbia and other jurisdictions.**”

The Project Charter document includes the meeting group’s membership list naming the three “external” representatives from CAPP: Richard Dunn, Lara Conrad and Christa Seaman. In contrast to information that identified the role and position of government participants, the corporate affiliations and roles of the three CAPP members were omitted. Dunn, who is vice-president of regulatory and external relations with **Encana Corporation**, is a registered provincial and federal lobbyist (the *Hill Times* reports that as a federal lobbyist Dunn is a “key voice in shaping the debate about Canada’s environment and climate change strategy”). Conrad is the Regulatory & Government Relations Team Leader with **Encana Corporation**. Seaman, a former GHG Projects Coordinator with **Canadian Natural Resources Limited**, is a current registered lobbyist for **CNRL**

and **Shell Canada**. Of all shale gas companies operating in northeast B.C., Encana has the largest holdings of petroleum leases. Shell has a significant portfolio investment stake in proposed shale gas developments throughout the world, and has mounted a sophisticated public relations campaign.

On August 18, 2011, the Alberta Federation of Labour, which received a copy of the leaked documents, quickly filed a complaint with Alberta's Ethics Commissioner on "a possible contravention of the *Lobbyists Act*." In the complaint, the Federation stated that "CAPP was not invited by the government to collaborate on public communication on Alberta shale gas development, rather CAPP approached the government.... although CAPP is in the Lobbyists Registry, none of the individuals lobbying the government on behalf of CAPP are registered as CAPP lobbyists." Based on its concerns, the Federation summarized that "it is our belief that the public interest has been undermined in this case", as "CAPP approached the government to take the lead in developing a government public relations campaign on shale gas development in Alberta."

Public relations and lobbying strategies by powerful and affluent industry organizations to access and develop public natural resources have occurred and evolved in Canada for quite some time. For instance, over a number of decades, the B.C. Council of Forest Industries (COFI), an alliance of national and international forest industry companies and corporations, effectively lobbied BC government administrations. It helped bypass environmental constraints and stifled public concerns while implementing an accelerated and unbridled rate of logging to liquidate old growth forests by clearcutting. During this period of profiteering, COFI accessed and ruined hundreds of public drinking watershed sources that had previously been protected through local, regional and provincial government policies, often defending the intrusions before politicians and the public with the mantra "logging enhances water quality". Like COFI, CAPP is attempting to inflict something similar within governments - albeit on a grander scale - on the controversial practice of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") of deep shale gas. Under the shadow of the *New West Partnership*, CAPP may be steering the way for an inter-provincial sympathetic administration to help control and limit public debate on environmental and resource issues.

"The leaked documents from Alberta are fundamentally disturbing, and challenge the core principles of our democracy", says Will Koop, BC Tap Water Alliance Coordinator. "The elected leaders and executive energy administrators of western Canada are caving into the petroleum industry, and are excluding public stakeholders from the fracking table. What's more, if CAPP gets its way, not only will the public suffer from an ill-natured public relations scheme thrust upon it by its own governments, but it will have to fund it as well. Small wonder why and shame on the B.C. government for ignoring public demands since last April for a public inquiry into fracking practices in northeast BC."

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To contact Will Koop, email: info@bctwa.org

To access the press release backgrounder, www.bctwa.org/FrackingBC.html