

Coal bed methane development results in even greater impacts than conventional gas development, including more infrastructure because wells must be spaced closer together. Vast quantities of potentially contaminated water from coal bed methane production may be disposed of in BC's rivers, streams and lakes, with unknown effects.

Recommendation 8: Suspend coalbed methane development until comprehensive studies into well spacing and water issues are completed to the satisfaction of affected communities, and until appropriate safeguards are put in place.

BC has compromised Graham Laurier Park by allowing the construction of an industry access road, and threatens to approve more of these roads through other parks. Changes also now allow directional drilling underneath parks. Meanwhile, the Muskwa-Kechika, a unique conservation area in BC's northeast is increasingly threatened by oil and gas activity.

Recommendation 9: Protect the integrity of BC's parks by reversing legislative changes that undermine our system of protected areas, and disallow industrial roads and development within park boundaries.

BC already has enough seismic lines to cross Canada 20 times. Oil and gas is eating into both the timber supply of forest companies and into critical habitat for wildlife. BC has no system to adequately manage for the cumulative impacts of multiple uses of the landscape.

Recommendation 10: Establish binding cumulative impact thresholds in BC's oil and gas areas, and budget activity between various uses of the landscape to be conducted within those thresholds.

For a copy of the complete report,
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Oil and Gas in British Columbia

10 Steps to Responsible Development

BC is experiencing an oil and gas boom. As with most booms, however, the rapid pace of activity has not led to responsible development. Landowners, conservationists, First Nations, and labour share this concern, and have joined together to release a **10 point platform** for responsible development in BC's terrestrial oil and gas industry.



1

Fossil fuels are finite, yet BC is planning as if they were infinite. Moreover, BC has yet to take its responsibility to tackle global warming seriously. Energy security means that we need to chart a different energy pathway.

Recommendation 1: Implement an Energy Plan for BC with more measured oil and gas development, increased conservation and efficiency measures, and aggressive promotion of renewable energy and hydrogen-based energy storage and delivery.

2

British Columbians are getting progressively fewer jobs out of its oil and gas sector even as production increases, while giving Albertans the majority of the work. BC is falling behind other jurisdictions in pursuing job creation in clean energy.

Recommendation 2: Create jobs by providing incentives for oil and gas companies to employ BC workers and to direct oil and gas into value-added products made in BC, and by aggressively shifting energy production into more labour-intensive renewable and energy efficiency projects.

3

BC gives extensive and tax and royalty credits to the highly profitable oil and gas industry. And, unlike Alberta, Alaska, and even Chad, BC has not recognized that fossil fuel revenues are finite and set some aside for the future.

Recommendation 3: End subsidies and royalty breaks to the oil and gas industry, and direct 25% of oil and gas revenues into a BC “heritage” fund to support a just transition to sustainable industries.

4

Oil and gas companies can drill on private property without the owner’s consent. BC citizens have fewer rights than Albertans in being able to appeal proposed wells that may directly impact their health or livelihood.

Recommendation 4: Give landowners and locals the power to say no to oil and gas development that may adversely affect them; at a minimum, provide BC citizens the same rights as Albertans to have their concerns addressed before approvals are granted.

5

A highly poisonous “sour” gas well can be drilled as close as 100 metres from a house, exposing the occupants to risks of health impacts from blowouts and low level exposure. Oil and gas production results in a range of other toxic releases, many of which are not well understood or regulated.

Recommendation 5: Create an independent health and pollution body to research, strengthen, and enforce pollution and health rules in BC relating to oil and gas activity.

6

Because of the heavy fragmentation of the landscape, oil and gas activity is reducing the ability of First Nations to exercise their hunting and fishing rights. Moreover, billions of dollars of resources are being extracted from underneath the feet of First Nations while they continue to live in poverty.

Recommendation 6: Recognize First Nations Treaty and Aboriginal Rights and Title through meaningful joint management, including First Nations consent over development, revenue sharing, and management of cumulative impacts.

7

Even BC’s weak laws governing oil and gas activity are not being enforced. Systemic non-compliance is reported year after year, with reporting itself being scaled down. Other agencies that oversee oil and gas activity, and that are more independent than the Oil and Gas Commission, have seen stark cutbacks.

Recommendation 7: Restore monitoring and enforcement staff to pre-2001 levels, and index increases in staff to wells drilled; implement meaningful fines for infractions; maintain oversight roles of agencies other than the Oil and Gas Commission.

