



Citizens Concerned About Coalbed Methane

Media Release

For Immediate Release

B.C. Communities Unite Around Coalbed Methane Action Plan

December 17, 2008 (Vancouver) – A coalition of citizens' groups has launched a province-wide campaign around a five-point action plan they say could end the current stalemate on coalbed methane development.

“Across B.C., coalbed methane projects are being delayed or stopped by local conflict because residents lack confidence in the province's approval process and regulations,” said Ted Ralfe, spokesperson for CCCBM-East Kootenay. “The action plan we're proposing is a way to restore public confidence and create a more certain investment climate for companies.”

The coalition, Citizens Concerned About Coalbed Methane, released its five-point plan on a new website, www.concernedaboutcbm.org. The plan, “Building a safe future for CBM,” calls for the following –

1. Suspend CBM drilling across B.C. until four key policy improvements are in place:
2. Local communities have a clear say in deciding where and how CBM projects proceed
3. CBM projects undergo mandatory environmental assessments that address cumulative impacts
4. “World-class” CBM regulations promised in B.C.'s Energy Plan are fully implemented and enforced
5. Sufficient funds are dedicated to independent baseline research and to proving the safety of “world-class” technologies.

“We acknowledge that once sound regulations are in place, CBM drilling can occur safely in some places,” said Shannon McPhail, Executive Director of Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition. “However, the approval process must start with the question of social license, and projects should proceed only if there is broad public support.”

Today's campaign launch follows a mixed-bag announcement from the B.C. government earlier this month, which put the brakes on CBM drilling in the Sacred Headwaters while greenlighting another controversial CBM project in the Elk Valley.

"This kind of contradictory decision-making highlights the need for a consistent approach to approving and regulating CBM projects across the province," said Sol Allison, Director of Save Our Similkameen. "Government has already made some progress towards better standards for CBM. We're calling for a province-wide pause on new drilling to allow the full action plan to be implemented."

B.C. residents and organizations are invited to sign on to the action plan at www.concernedaboutcbm.org and show their support for a consistent, responsible approach to CBM across the province.

"We think industry will also be interested in this action plan, because it would increase investor confidence and allow good projects to proceed safely and smoothly," adds Ted Ralfe. "Today's band-aid approach serves neither CBM companies nor communities in the long run."

Coalbed methane projects have been or are currently proposed in B.C.'s Elk Valley (British Petroleum), Similkameen Valley (Petrobank), Sacred Headwaters (Royal Dutch Shell), Hudson's Hope area (Hudson's Hope Gas, Royal Dutch Shell), Vancouver Island, and Telkwa.

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