# New Brunswick must set 'rules of engagement' for water

### David McLaughlin says governments must involve all groups in policy decisions

##### [CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/credit.html)

#### Posted: Oct 11, 2012 12:19 PM AT

#### Last Updated: Oct 11, 2012 1:11 PM AT

New Brunswick could become a model province for how to shape a sustainable approach to developing the shale gas industry, according to a public policy expert.

David McLaughlin, the former president and chief executive officer of the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy, said in an interview on Thursday the provincial government is in a difficult position on the shale gas issue.

McLaughlin, who is delivering a speech on water use and resource development at the University of New Brunswick on Thursday, said the shale gas debate has become too polarizing.

“The idea of putting a padlock on this development, our province needs this development, we need economic development, we need jobs,” he said.

“The reality is, if you don’t have energy resources in today’s economy you are really second tier. New Brunswick has a chance to get at this, it has to do it right.”

Premier David Alward has said repeatedly that he will not allow a shale gas industry to develop in the province unless it can be done safely.

He has also said the cash-strapped province could use the economic benefits that an industry could offer.

When it comes to developing a water policy, there is often a conflict between the needs of companies and the environment. McLaughlin said there is tension between the departments of economic development and the environment within governments.

He said it is important for government to “get to the watershed level” when making policy decisions. He said that means business groups, environmental groups and community associations must be involved in setting water policy.

The policy expert said governments need to invest in collecting data that can guide policy decisions.

McLaughlin said New Brunswick is in a position to be a leader on the shale gas file. He said the Quebec government is taking an increasingly strident position against the industry.

“What New Brunswick does on this file will matter a lot. We can be a good lab for getting it right. I’m just hopeful that we will,” he said

**'Rules of engagement' needed**

The Progressive Conservative government has been dealing with opposition to shale gas exploration in the last two years.

Environment Minister Bruce Fitch and Natural Resources Minister Bruce Northrup announced a series of proposed regulatory changes earlier this year that are designed to safeguard the environment if the industry takes hold in New Brunswick.

There are 116 proposed reforms to the regulatory framework that oversees the oil and gas industry.

The provincial government is also promising to impose higher fines on companies that break the new rules.

Hydraulic fracturing or hydro-fracking is a process where exploration companies inject a mixture of water, sand and chemicals into the ground, creating cracks in shale rock formations. That process allows companies to extract natural gas from areas that would otherwise go untapped.

Opponents to the shale gas industry say the hydro-fracking process can cause water and air pollution.

McLaughlin said when there is a competition for water, it is important to have clear rules to follow.

“When you have all that competition at the same watershed, you need to get some rules of engagement,” he said.

McLaughlin’s term at the national organization ended after the federal government eliminated it in recent budget cuts.

He also worked as a deputy minister in the former Bernard Lord government.

**Environmental Science 122 (1 page)**

1. As a young adult this issue will have a great effect on your generation. Discuss the pros and cons of this issue and give your opinion on the topic.
2. From the information you may have heard or read, do you think that this process is a danger to the environment?

**Environmental Science 123 (1/2 page)**

1. Do you feel that exploring for natural gas in our province is of any benefit to us as citizens?
2. What are the potential dangers?
3. What is the benefit(s)?