

## *Impact of Shale Gas on Hospitals and Health Costs for all of New Brunswick*

There are many costs to the public that are not included in the cost-benefit analysis of shale gas extraction. **One of the largest hidden costs is the added burden on the health system** caused by the addition of workers (many from the US) in a new, dangerous industry.

According to the **Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the fatality rate in the oil and gas industry surged as the drilling boom accelerated** since 2002, and is **seven times the national average** of all industries. Nearly a third of the 648 deaths from 2003 through 2008 were in **highway crashes, due to the vast amount of truck traffic required for fracking operations.**

As **NB Chief Medical Officer for Health, Dr. Eilish Cleary** points out, “Because there has been little direct experience (with shale gas) to date in New Brunswick, (we must) draw on **experience from other jurisdictions** where the shale gas industry has already undergone significant expansion and/or study, such as the US states of Pennsylvania, Texas, Colorado, Wyoming and New York, amongst others...”

There is no reason to assume New Brunswickers living in shale gas areas will not have the same health problems found in other areas, including those encountered in the case studies below. **Since our health care is funded on a provincial basis, all New Brunswick taxpayers will pay for these increased costs** associated with shale gas and will be affected by the strain on our healthcare resources. Consider these **case studies from developed shale gas areas.**

### Watford City, North Dakota – Bakken Shale

*“Patients come with burns from hot water, with hands and fingers crushed by steel tongs, with injuries from chains that have whipsawed them off their feet. Ambulances carry mangled, bloodied bodies from accidents on roads packed with trucks and heavy-footed drivers.”*

Swamped by uninsured laborers flocking to dangerous jobs, **medical facilities in the area are sinking under skyrocketing debt, a flood of gruesome injuries and bloated business costs from the inflated economy.**

**The problems at McKenzie County Hospital have been acute.**



According to Daniel Kelly, the hospital's chief executive, the hospital's debt increased by more than 2000% over the past four years, an average annual increase of 500%. Further,

- In three years, **emergency room visits shot up from an average of 100 to 400 per month.**
- Ambulance calls in the region increased by about 60% from 2006 – 2011.
- **Traumatic injuries in the oil patch increased by 200%** from 2007 through mid-2011.
- The 12 medical facilities in western North Dakota saw their **combined debt rise by 46 percent over the 2011 and 2012 fiscal years.**
- Costs are rising to hire and retain service staff members.

*Source: An Oil Boom Takes a Toll on Health Care; Matthew Staver for The New York Times, January 27, 2013*

## Bradford, Pennsylvania - Marcellus Shale

The majority of problems documented here are traceable back to a single cause – road destruction caused by shale gas operations. In Bradford, the report notes that:

- **Volunteers are burning out** because of increasing numbers of calls.
- Patient transport and **response to emergency calls are delayed** and hampered.
- Getting to the Troy Community Hospital from some parts of the city is difficult or impossible at certain times.
- **Accident victims are most often local residents.**
- The **roads are in severe disrepair** and very hard on staff vehicles.
- Staff safety while traveling is now a serious concern and patient transport is uncomfortable on rough roads.
- The delivery of home care services is delayed due to traffic volume.

*Source: Staci Covey, President of Guthrie Healthcare Troy Hospital, Bradford Co., PA  
"Local Experiences Related to the Marcellus Shale Industry," 5/10/11*

## In the News

Jason Ware, a safety coordinator with Antero, said that in the 36 months he had worked at the rig, 25 to 30 work-related accidents occurred that resulted in broken bones or surgeries, not counting stitches. Five workers from a site were flown to a burn unit in Pittsburgh. Two died. Antero and Frontier Drilling settled a \$12 million lawsuit with a worker who snapped his spinal cord.

[The West Virginia Gazette](#)

The AFLCIO, United Steelworkers, and the United Mine Workers of America, say federal regulators need to pay more attention to workplace health and safety in the shale gas industry - focusing on crystalline silica, (used in the fracking process), and worker exposure to diesel

### **Tax Payers Will Pay New Costs!**

All New Brunswickers will have an overburdened health system. Tax payers will have to pay the increased costs of health care and related services, and thus be subsidizing the shale gas industry.

particulates, airborne aldehydes and hydrogen sulfides. The workplace fatality rate among oil and gas workers is 27.5 deaths per 100,000.

[Unions Raise Health Alarms Over Fracking; Susan Phillips, National Public Radio, May 22, 2012](#)

I have seen many more fatalities in this industry than in any other type of industry in which I represent injured workers.

[Issues faced by injured Marcellus Shale gas workers. James Robert Carroll Jr., Personal Injury Attorney](#)