

In Brief... Nashwaak undermined

- **Income of women in NB from all sources was 66 % that of men in 2009**, according to StatsCan. Of the 300,450 women in NB who have income, their median income was \$21,130 while the 283,000 men with income had a median income of \$32,040. In 2000, women’s income from all sources was 62% of men.
- On August 20th, Moncton City Council voted to **ban shale gas development** from city property and watersheds.
- Bruce Fitch, NB's Environment Minister, should never have issued permits to **spray New Brunswick's public forest** with glyphosates this year, according to the Conservation Council. Glyphosates are currently under review by Health Canada due to recent scientific studies that point to health impacts on humans and wildlife. Three petitions against herbicide spraying of public lands have been presented in the Legislature in the past decade –to the Lord, Graham and Alward governments. NB has been spraying herbicides since the 1970s when it first permitted pulp and paper companies to clearcut natural forest and replace it with plantations. Spraying occurs each year in August and September and lasts about 40 days. New Brunswickers pay for the chemical spraying of the public forest. Conversion of natural forest to plantations, according to Natural Resources Canada, can exceed \$1,000/ha. Nova Scotia recently announced that they will no longer fund herbicide spraying of their forest. Quebec banned herbicide spraying of its public forest over a decade ago in 2001.
- The **closure of Acadian Lines** presents the Maritime Provinces with an unprecedented opportunity to build a new system that provides public transit across the region, says the Atlantic Canada Sustainable Energy Coalition. The Coalition, which includes the Conservation Council, calls on the provincial governments of NB, PEI, and NS to work together to form a Maritime Transit Agency. The Saskatchewan Transportation Company, a provincial Crown corporation, provides bus service to 290 communities across Saskatchewan. Together, the Maritime Provinces have a greater population and smaller land area than Saskatchewan.
- **JD Irving is planning to open a gold, silver, copper and zinc mine** in Bald Mountain, Aroostook County in northern Maine. According to a J.D. Irving’s media release, “The Governor of Maine, Paul LePage, recently signed a bill to revise Maine’s mining regulations as a result (in part) of Aroostook Timberlands LLC’s interest in metal reserves in Aroostook County’s Bald Mountain.”



Photo by Bob Dunnouchel.

Students at McAdam Avenue Elementary School go to the forest at Sunset U-Pick for nature studies and to organize clean up days.

Friends of the Sunset U-Pick, Forest and Wetland are requesting that the City of Fredericton rezone the city-owned property as open space/agricultural to save it from encroaching development. Robert Whitney, executive director of the Maritime College of Forestry Technology, said, “Like many forested areas, the trees and vegetation in this forest deliver benefits that are required and desired by urban areas. These are functions that most cities of the world are attempting to retain and in many cases recreate after having lost them due to urban development.” The rezoning request will go before first and second reading at a Fredericton City Council meeting on Sept. 10th at 7:00pm. The final debate and vote will occur on Sept. 24th. More info: wepicktheupick.org

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The Nashwaak River, provincially designated "A Class" waters, is threatened by the Sisson Brook mine project, one of the world's largest proposed open pit mines for tungsten and molybdenum.

By STEPHANIE MERRILL

Since 2008, there has been a major development project flying under the radar in New Brunswick. The Sisson Brook mine project is a proposal for one of the world’s largest open pit mines for tungsten and molybdenum. The mine, if it goes ahead, will be dug out of the headwaters of the Nashwaak River, 100km (by road) north of Fredericton upstream from the Village of Stanley. Perhaps a bit surprisingly, not many people are aware of the mine, and even fewer are talking about it.

The scale of the development is alarming by both New Brunswick and world standards. The information on the specifics of the project is sparse; however, from currently available proponent and government documents, the project is slated to have an overall footprint of 1800 ha and an open pit 250 m deep. The two associated tailings dams rival the most massive in the world at 87 m at its highest and 6 km in combined length. By contrast, the Mactaquac dam is up to 55 m in height and 0.5 km long.

Some residents and local organizations have been following the 400 million dollar development since its original proponent, Geodex Minerals, registered the project with both the provincial and federal environmental review processes. The project was later sold to Northcliff Resources, a subsidiary of Hunter Dickison Inc.

The Nashwaak Watershed Association (NWA) and the New Brunswick Salmon Council are particularly concerned about the potential affect the development will have on the pristine state of the Nashwaak River ecosystem. The watershed has been provisionally classified as “A” (“Excellent”) water quality by the provincial government. This water quality is a large contributor to the fact that the Nashwaak is still home to a relatively healthy and recovering run of Outer Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon which has been recommended to be listed as “Endangered” under the Federal Species at Risk Act.

In June, NWA, with four other community-based groups, submitted the formal request to the Department of Environment and Local Government to legally classify the river and its tributaries under section 8.2 of the Water Classification Regulation of the Clean Water Act. The

Taking a closer look at EI reform

(continued from page 1) ... consequences of EI reform? Here we need to pay close attention to the regional demographics of Canada. Let’s assume EI reform achieves its maximal objectives and every single seasonally unemployed worker in Atlantic Canada is permanently removed from EI. This would mean approximately 20,000 workers—1% of EI recipients—would no longer receive benefits.

A result such as this is statically insignificant and therefore can’t be a motivating force behind EI reform. What about the other 99% receiving EI, 85% of whom live west of the New Brunswick border? How will EI reform affect these workers? EI recipients will be forced off of EI sooner. They will be forced to take jobs at a lower rate of pay, and families will suffer as commuting times increase and/or families have to relocate.

Workers at the lower end of the income ladder will be kicked off into the waiting hands of the most rotten employers around. These reforms are an attempt to depress wages for all Canadians and to give employers more power over workers. They are a gift to capital and a slap in the face for labour.

It’s often suggested that hard working Canadians are the ones who are bitter about their “lazy” neighbours living off the state, but in 2010, 46% of surveyed Canadians said they felt the level of income support provided by the EI program was adequate, and 39% said that EI was insufficient and should be more generous. With 85% indicating that EI was either sufficient or in need of expansion this hardly provides a mandate for reducing the program – an important fact if we care about a democratic process that enables the aspirations of the vast majority to guide policy development.

Fifty-six percent felt the EI program worked well and only needed minor changes while 35% felt major changes were needed. Did the 35% want to see changes along the lines of proposed reform? No. The major change most hoped to see was an expansion of the benefit period.

The corporate media have done an excellent job of shifting attention to the 1% of seasonally unemployed EI recipients who are immaterial in the overall picture, and they’ve done a brilliant job of inverting the relationship between general employment rates and EI claimants.

For those of us who prefer facts to ideology, the corporate media’s complicity in governmental distortions is abhorrent. We would do well to avoid their distracting shenanigans. Instead, let’s ask what effects these reforms will have on the vast majority of Canadians—you can be certain that those responsible for these reforms have given this question some serious thought.

implementation of the Water Classification program has been stalled in 22 watersheds around the province for over 10 years. Both the government and Northcliff have been unwilling to incorporate these water quality standards into the Environmental Assessment (EA) process.

Ecological concerns aside, Lawrence Wuest, a resident of Stanley and an active follower of the economic feasibility of the development, says there are serious financial concerns with the proposal. “The tungsten at Sisson is actually of very poor quality at 0.07%,” says Wuest, noting that other tungsten mines in North America have tungsten ore that has a concentration approaching 3%, 40 times that of at Sisson ore.

Wuest explains that “in order to pay off initial investors and attract new ones, the mine will zero in on the sweet spots of ore in the initial years. The remaining ore will be lower in overall quality and the mine will quickly depreciate into a marginal up and down enterprise, periodically leaving an enlarged workforce to wallow in a revised EI regime, creating a myriad of health and social problems.”

Despite their concerns of ecological and financial risks, local organizations have been trying to maintain lines of communication with government and Northcliff.

Gary Spencer, an active member of both the NWA and Salmon Council and a resident of the area, says that each group has been very actively involved since the EA process began. However, Spencer has become frustrated over the past year saying that an absence of open and honest communications with the proponent and regulators leads him to believe that the best interests of the residents and the watershed are not being protected.

“Since year one, we cannot say that we have really been afforded an opportunity for stakeholder engagement” says Spencer. “We have had lots of opportunity to speak but it appears that we have not had much opportunity to be heard.”

Spencer is referring to the fact that many of the organizations’ concerns have been left out of the official Terms of Reference for the EA and a stakeholder consultation report issued by Northcliff in recent months. Furthermore, the Taymouth Community Association says they are listed in the report as having been “consulted” however spokesperson Peter DeMarsh says that is not true. DeMarsh says that their organization hadn’t even been contacted by Northcliff until after the report was issued.

The EA study report is expected to be released by Northcliff in autumn 2012. In the meantime, Mac MacFarlane, a camp owner near Nashwaak Lake, in the vicinity of the proposed mine site, has taken it upon himself to engage with the public. MacFarlane has given a number of information presentations to different interest groups in the region, and is willing to present more.

“The public cannot legitimately participate in an EA process if they have no idea that the proposal exists or what it consists of,” says MacFarlane. “I want to at least get people thinking and talking, and so far most people have been absolutely shocked at the scale of this proposed operation.”

CCNB and NWA have been granted official Intervener status by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) for the federal environmental review. CCNB will be bringing a suite of academics together to review the EA study report prepared by Northcliff in autumn of 2012.

visit nbmediacoop.org!

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org To list your event, email: community@nbmediacoop.org

Quebec Student Solidarity and Building a Student Movement in NB. Quebec student representatives of CLASSE will speak in Moncton on Sept. 19th at 1pm-3pm at the Jeanne-de-Valois, UdeM, and in Fredericton on Thurs., Sept. 20th at 7pm at Tilley Hall, Room 102, University of New Brunswick. Learning from the experiences of Quebec students in their successful mobilizations and building a student movement in New Brunswick is critical in a province with the second highest tuition in the country. For more information on CLASSE, visit stopthehike.ca The Fredericton stop is organized by Students for Direct Democracy. Contact: studentsfordirectdemocracy@riseup.net

Take Back the Night March. Women and children will march to protest sexual violence on Sept. 21 in Fredericton. Meet at 8:00pm at Fredericton City Hall.

NB Media Co-op Annual General Meeting. Sat, Sept. 22, 4:00pm. Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton. Review our highlights over the past year and discuss the future of the NB Media Co-op. All are welcome but only members can vote. Join us in person or by Skype or phone. More info: www.nbmediacoop.org Contact: info@nbmediacoop.org

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