

Shale gas companies endanger wetlands

(continued from page 1) ...potential catastrophe that could ruin families and entire communities.” He notes the nature of the watershed itself means there’s simply no way to safely allow shale gas companies or heavy industry into the area.

Marsh explains that he and his neighbour have three wells within 120 feet of each other. Water testing has revealed that each of those three wells draws water from a different underground aquifer. “One mistake and they could ruin three aquifers at once,” Marsh says.



Astena Marsh, 12, has been raising poultry for three years and now has a sustainable small business that exports birds to other provinces. Her father, Al Marsh, says shale gas development will “ruin the future” for Astena and the next generation. Photo courtesy of Al Marsh.

Community Calendar

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

Greener Village Community Food Centre’s Open House. Sunday, Sept. 15, 11am-4pm, 686 Riverside Drive, Fredericton. The Fredericton Food Bank has been busy transforming itself into a Community Food Centre and we’re ready to show off. Enjoy locally-sourced breakfast of blueberry pancakes and baked beans for \$5 (11am-1pm). Treat yourself to an ice cream while strolling through the Community Gardens. Join us for an unforgettable day filled with great local food, music, activities for all ages and loads of fun! Contact Leah at leahanstis@gmail.com.

Take Back the Night. Meet Friday, Sept. 20 at 8:00 pm at Fredericton City Hall. Take Back the Night is an internationally held march and rally that draws attention to and opposes sexual violence. For more information, contact the Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre at 506 454-0460 or fsacc@nbnet.nb.ca.

NB Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper every month. To find out the meeting time and venue, email info@nbmediacoop.org.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art to not only entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays during the fall and winter at 7:00 pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. In Sackville, films are screened monthly at Mt. Allison University. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

Arrest of Moncton sex workers turns spotlight on issue

By BETH LYONS

In July, 11 women in Moncton were arrested for prostitution-related charges.

The arrests were explained by an RCMP press release which stated: “The operation is part of an ongoing effort to curb sex trade activities in our community. The Codiac RCMP’s primary objective is to ensure safe homes and safe communities for all citizens.”

The arrests elicited a strong response from various women’s advocates in the community, myself included.

I’d like to take this moment of shared community attention on the issue of sex work to speak to why these arrests are disturbing.

First and foremost, if we’re going to talk about sex work, we need to know that Canada’s laws on prostitution are a bizarre affair and currently being challenged in the Supreme Court of Canada. The deal is that prostitution is actually perfectly legal in Canada; it’s certain activities that are criminalized if they are done in relation to prostitution (hence the fact that charges are “prostitution-related”). Specifically, there are three laws in our Criminal Code that relate to activities surrounding prostitution: a law against the operation of bawdy houses, a law against living off the avails of prostitution, and a law against communication in public for the purpose of prostitution.

These laws are being challenged as being in violation of Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects our right to life, liberty, and the security of the person. The argument is that these laws increase the danger surrounding prostitution by preventing sex workers from working indoors at a fixed location, prevents sex workers from hiring security guards, drivers, etc. (as the guard or driver would be living off the avails of prostitution), and preventing sex workers from taking the time to screen clients in public for suspicious behavior, intoxication, etc.

This challenge was first heard in an Ontario court that struck down all three laws, but instituted a stay in the ruling taking effect so that the federal government could appeal. The federal government’s appeal to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice resulted in the communication law being upheld, but the other two laws changing. The ruling on the appeal removed mention of prostitution from the bawdy house law (effectively letting the law stand, but with no relation to prostitution), and the law prohibiting living off the avails of prostitution was narrowed to only criminalize situations of exploitation. After the appeal ruling, the case was brought to the Supreme Court of Canada, where it was heard this June. Until a decision is issued by the Supreme Court (and possibly for a period afterward) the stay remains in place.

It’s interesting to note that the Ontario court that heard the appeal included in its ruling an acknowledgement that “the provisions are aimed at the harm to the interests of the community. There is no evidence of a broader objective of controlling the institutionalization or commercialization of prostitution, with the ultimate aim of eradicating or discouraging prostitution.”

So, abolition of the sex trade isn’t the law’s endgame, as of yet; reducing prostitution-related harm to the community is.

This is the crux of what I find disturbing when we talk of prostitution: our conception of community. The police arrested 11 women in Moncton in the interest of safe community; the Criminal Code criminalizes certain activities when done in relation to prostitution for the sake of community.

I have to point out: sex workers are, in fact, community members and they are often the members of our community who are most at risk of violence and harm, particularly if they’re engaged in survival or street sex work.

According to accounts of the bust that were shared with us by a service provider, the women arrested in this bust were solicited by undercover RCMP members. They weren’t necessarily working at the time; they were in public, and they were known sex workers. At least one of the women arrested was reportedly only known to the RCMP as a sex worker because she disclosed her status as one when reporting a crime committed against her.

Busts such as these cut sex workers off from services. When individuals are arrested for prostitution-related offenses in Moncton, they’re often given a restricted area ban that prohibits them from being in the place they were working at the time of arrest. Given the nature of Moncton’s sex trade, restricted area bans often encompass the downtown area and cut sex workers off from resources such as the YWCA, AIDS Moncton, the Salvus Clinic, etc.

It also makes it clear that the RCMP is not a resource for them — even when they aren’t working, even when they’re the victims of crime — and does little to support sex workers in exiting the trade or engaging in prostitution in a more legally-compliant (and, ideally, safer) manner. In other words, busts do little but sweep workers off the streets for a short period of time, while further marginalizing them in the process.

We need to look to jurisdictions such as Vancouver for ideas of how better to address sex work as a community. For example, the Vancouver Police Department’s “Sex Work Enforcement Guideline” stipulates that “The VPD does not seek to increase the inherent dangers faced by sex workers, especially survival sex workers. Therefore, where there are nuisance related complaints against survival sex workers, alternative measures and assistance must be considered with enforcement a last resort.”

After the backlash to the bust, the Codiac Regional RCMP announced that it will be striking a task force on sex work in the Moncton area, and will work with numerous stakeholders, including the community organizations that spoke out after the bust, at the table with them. Representatives from the RCMP stressed that this will be a collaborative group and that the RCMP will not be its leader, but one of the many stakeholders present. The RCMP’s quick response to the backlash, coupled with its commitment to a collaborative approach in addressing the issue of sex work in Moncton, bodes well for the task force.

Beth Lyons is the associate director of YWCA Moncton.

In Brief

- Two males in Halifax were arrested on Aug. 8th in connection with the **Rehtaeh Parsons** case. Parsons committed suicide in April after what her family says were months of torture for her when a digital photo of her being sexually assaulted circulated around her school. Ardath Whynacht, who volunteers in Halifax supporting women affected by intimate partner violence, wrote in the Halifax Media Co-op on Aug. 9th: “Let us go beyond symbolic arrests and flowers on the grave. Let us talk to our boys and give all youth a place that is safe. Let us not turn to the easy solution of making a few troubled young men the scapegoat for a rape culture that is deep, thick and pervasive. Let us all become leaders for our children and ask questions with answers that may be difficult to hear. Let us believe in these men to be part of the change we want to see and expect no less. As adults, that is our only job.”
- Stack emissions testing done on the **Arbec Forest Products Mill** in Miramichi in mid-April showed that the concentration of particulate matter measured from the main stack exceeded the concentration limit stipulated in the company’s Approval to Operate. The Department of Environment required the

company to submit a plan on how it will address the emissions from the mill. The company is working on implementing the action items in the plan. Testing on stack emissions will be done once the action items have been completed. The Department has also required Arbec to undertake an air dispersion modeling study to examine ground level concentrations of air contaminants.

- Organizations across the Maritimes are rejecting **TransCanada’s proposal to ship 1.1 million barrels a day of tar sands oil** across the country to a terminus in Saint John, on the shores of the Bay of Fundy. “Over the past year we have heard countless stories of pipelines leaking around North America. It is not a question of whether the Energy East pipeline would leak but when and where,” worries Gretchen Fitzgerald, Director of Sierra Club’s Atlantic Chapter.
- The Fredericton Peace Coalition joined other groups across the world in opposing the expropriation of the community of Roche in Colombia for the **Cerrejón coal mine**, the source of NB Power’s coal. “There is no justification for another forced displacement in La Guajira. The international community is totally against this option,” read the letter sent to the company, owned by multinationals, Anglo-American, BHP-Billiton and Xstrata.



The proposed Sisson **tungsten and molybdenum mine** in Stanley got a step closer with Northcliff Resources filing its Environmental Assessment with the federal and provincial governments. Lawrence Wuest, a concerned resident in Stanley, says, “The proponent of the Sisson Mine continues to run from any discussion of the health and ecological costs of the arsenic and hydrogen sulfide emissions from this mine. The proponent also avoids any discussion of reclamation bonding, and the financial and human costs of a tailing dam failure at Sisson. The NB taxpayers are ill-served by a government that tolerates, and contributes to this continued secrecy.” Photo by Tracy Glynn.

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