

# Daring & Dedicated

Meet the scientists and organizers who are rewriting the rules.



## The Fire Fighter

**JESSICA ERNST** spent a quarter-century as an environmental consultant to Canada's oil and gas industry before she became its sworn enemy. What literally sparked her outrage was the flammable tap water from the aquifer below her property in Rosebud, Alberta, which Ernst blames on methane contamination from Encana's "risky and experimental drilling program," aka hydraulic fracturing.

In 2007, Ernst filed a \$33-million lawsuit against the Alberta government and energy giant Encana, alleging that regulators "failed to follow the investigation and enforcement processes they had established and publicized," thereby threatening the health of people, property, livestock and their shared water supplies. In October 2013, Alberta's chief justice finally green-lit the case for trial, but absolved the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) because the province had previously granted its regulator statutory immunity.

Ernst told *The Tyee* why she has no choice but to appeal: "Chief Justice Wittmann ruled that the ERCB has a duty to protect the public, but not me. I am the public; we all are. Without water to bathe in, the public's well-being declines – as mine has for years. Without water to drink, the public dies, so do all individuals – including Justice Wittmann and his loved ones. There is no frack worth that."

To back up her claims, Ernst also released a report in June 2013 that compiles 10 years' worth of scientific facts and findings about the dire impacts of fracking on groundwater.

[ernstversusencana.ca](http://ernstversusencana.ca)