

Monday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – Telegraph Journal Editorial  
**FOCUS ON SCIENCE, NOT POLITICS**

The province's recently established energy institute is again in the news as Fred Metallic, a high-profile aboriginal board member, quit the body over perceived interference from government. This is not the first setback for the institute, as it was rocked by controversy when it was learned that Louis LaPierre, who was involved with the institute from the very beginning, had for years worked under fraudulent academic credentials.

To ensure its credibility - if not its long-term survival - the fledgling institute needs to focus on the science, and not the politics, of hotly contested energy issues like shale gas. And the public needs to give them room to grow, and not expect answers to pressing questions immediately. Good science takes time, and if we want energy development in this province to proceed safely, we need an independent science advisory group giving impartial information. The sooner it can dislodge itself from the politics of shale gas, the faster the energy institute can start on the important work before it.

It also needs to develop a clear and transparent arm's length relationship with the provincial government, as provincial officials are obviously keen to further develop the energy industry in New Brunswick. Having an impartial scientific body is a critical step in ensuring that industry can grow in a way that respects New Brunswick's environment; neither industry nor government politicians should be interfering with the scientific examination of energy issues in New Brunswick. While we strongly believe that energy resources like shale gas can be of enormous benefit to the province, we are very supportive of the idea that the best scientific study should be undertaken alongside the promised developments.

Already, numerous scientific bodies throughout North America have published extensively on shale gas development, and the vast majority of the scientific literature suggests that the industry can safely be developed. We need more of that thorough scientific examination here in New Brunswick; all too often the public discussion has been based on YouTube videos instead of peer-reviewed scientific evidence. If we want to elevate the debate over energy in this province, we need to ensure the best scientific information is close at hand. For this reason, we encourage the province's energy institute to focus on the science, and leave the politics of energy to the politicians.