

Newfoundland and Labrador Fracking Awareness Network
86 West St., Suite 6
Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador
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26 November, 2013

Honourable Derrick Dalley
Minister of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Building, 50 Elizabeth Ave.
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6

Honourable Joan Shea
Minister of Environment and Conservation
P.O. Box 8700
4th Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6

Re: Newfoundland and Labrador Government Position on Hydraulic Fracturing

Dear Honourable Derrick Dalley and Honourable Joan Shea,

The Newfoundland and Labrador Fracking Awareness Network (NL-FAN) is a non-partisan group of organizations and individuals from across the province who have serious concerns about the potential risks of unconventional oil exploration and extraction, including hydraulic fracturing, in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our network would like to thank the government for its decision on November 4, 2013 to “not accept applications for onshore and onshore to offshore petroleum exploration using hydraulic fracturing.” We applaud the Hon. Dalley’s statement that the government’s “first and main consideration when exploring an economic development opportunity is the health and safety of our people and protection of the environment.” In addition, we would like to highlight that the government’s decisions to “undertake a balanced review” and “undertake public engagement” before any decision is made are part of the precautionary approach that is necessary to address an issue that has become so important to the people of this province.

Public concern over the use of unconventional oil exploration and extraction is growing substantially in the province as well as throughout Canada and globally. Therefore our network does not support a proposal for an internal government review, which we believe would be too narrow in scope. We believe that policy can be best informed and guided by a strong, independent, science-based review that addresses impacts across all sectors and that is grounded in transparent public consultation.

The NL-FAN, through its affiliate organizations and members, urges the provincial and federal governments to establish an independent, non-governmental, non-industry panel to:

1. conduct a scientific and public review of hydraulic fracturing in Newfoundland and Labrador in order to fully assess the potential health, environmental, economic, and social effects on the region as a whole;
2. review the associated regulatory, policy, and legislative issues; and
3. recommend an approach that protects citizens and the environment and fosters sustainable development.

Many of the public concerns are related to potential impacts of this technology on human health. Our network feels strongly that an independent, science-based review should also include a health impact assessment of hydraulic fracturing and other associated technologies employed under unconventional oil exploration and extraction. This health impact assessment should engage health professionals and medical scientists. In addition, an independent review should address potential impacts on existing sustainable industries such as fisheries and the province's billion dollar tourism industry.

We therefore take this opportunity to ask: will the government establish an independent, external panel of experts to complete a comprehensive, science-based, review and public consultation on unconventional oil and gas exploration and extraction?

The NL-FAN continues to call on the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take a precautionary approach with unconventional oil and gas exploration and extraction. We believe that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has the opportunity to be a global leader in establishing the best possible, independent review on unconventional oil exploration and extraction. Our network looks forward to working with government in this process.

Sincerely,

Simon Jansen, spokesperson NL-FAN

CC

The Honourable Kathy Dunderdale, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador,
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The Honourable Susan Sullivan, Minister of Health and Community Services,
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The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada,
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The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment,
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