

Dear Dr. Gosine,

I am writing this letter to you and the fracking review panel with a reluctant and heavy heart. I retired from the military in 2011 after serving for almost 28 years. We built a home in Bay St. George in 2012, myself and my wife are both from the area. In all of my nearly 30 years of being away from home and being in many places in the world, I returned home for vacation at least once or twice each and every year. I just love it here, the woods, the water, the mountains and the fresh air. I am a hunter, berry picker, I love to fish, and I enjoy hiking, canoeing and kayaking. I am a father, a grandfather and a Mi'kmaq First Nations member. I was medically released from the Canadian Armed Forces because I was diagnosed with multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS), likely because of over exposure to many chemicals that are now banned in the aircraft industry. I moved back home to NL because I love it here but also because the air, water and land are safer for me. If fracking is permitted to happen, where can I move to? My clean and beautiful Western NL will never be again.

Dr. Gosine, who on the panel will speak up for our elderly, our already sick and our youth? Who will speak for our rivers, ponds, lakes, our bays and the Gulf of St. Lawrence? What about the effects of fracking on global warming? Who is speaking for the woods, the meadows, the mountains, the beaches and the bogs? We, the First Nations peoples are supposed to have the responsibility to protect and speak up for the environment, the animals, fish, birds and everything in creation that does not have a voice. Our decisions are supposed to be made with consideration for our grandchildren 7 generations from now. How can this happen if there is no First Nations person on this panel that is also lacking in the voice of women, tourism human health and fisherpersons? How many other voices might be missing from the panel?

I won't send links to the growing list of places in the world that has banned fracking. I also won't attach web links to the many harmful reports of water contamination and health problem directly resulting from fracking. I will point out that 3 of the 5 person panel have already spoken in support of fracking. That does not seem to be what should form an independent and unbiased panel.

Some people consider me to be a Mi'kmaq Cultural Leader, but I contently consider myself to be just a helper, nothing more and nothing less. I humbly request that you take the time to contact me and perhaps other First Nations leaders to ask their opinion/views on this highly controversial and harmful practice of fracking. Please contact the leaders of other relevant groups that are not represented on the panel. Please be strong and unbiased in your recommendation to the government. A great responsibility has been bestowed upon you, I hope you are the person that will consider the numerous silent voices while working with a small group of men to help guide the government of the day.

Wela'lin (thank you),
K. Bennett