

Letter to The Editor

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Dept. of Natural Resources in conflict of interest on Fracking

Last Thursday the Department of Natural Resources issued a news release, "[Minister Encourages Participation in Panel Discussions on Hydraulic Fracturing in Western Newfoundland](#)".

In the release Minister Derrick Dalley states, "The health and safety of our people and protection of the environment are our main considerations, and will continue to guide our decisions, as we pursue opportunities to develop our natural resources."

If this truly is the case why weren't the "health and safety of our people and protection of the environment" the main features of the graphic at the head of the news release, instead of the words "A Vibrant Economy" accompanied by an image of two workers in an industrial workplace?

If health, safety and environmental protection are main considerations on the issue of hydraulic fracturing, as stated by the Department of Natural Resources and the provincial government, then why is it we so rarely, if at all, see media releases pertaining to hydraulic fracturing from the premier, the environment minister, and the health minister?

I have yet to see or hear any real acknowledgement from my provincial government of the widely recognized threats to health, safety and the environment, as recognized by Nova Scotia's [Wheeler Panel](#) and the federal government-commissioned Council of Canadian Academies [report](#), among others.

Instead of mainly considering and representing the health, safety and environmental interests of the people of our province, Mr. Dalley and his government associates appear to mostly represent the interests of oil corporations on the issue of hydraulic fracturing. Yes, we need economic development, but not at unacceptable risks to our health, safety and the environment, and as well as to our tourism and fishery economies.

We do not need a questionable panel to determine if fracking is safe and socially and environmentally acceptable. We need our government to stop wasting our money by trying to reinvent the wheel. We need Mr. Dalley and our government to represent our health, safety and environmental interests by either banning fracking or imposing an indefinite moratorium on its use.

Why is it that practically all the provincial government media releases and public pronouncements pertaining to fracking are coming from the natural resources minister and a department that mostly focuses on natural resource development? I suggest Mr. Dalley and his Department of Natural Resources is in a conflict of interest in this regard.

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The recently announced public consultation locations the fracking review panel will visit include only Corner Brook and Stephenville, thus framing the situation as if fracking is an issue limited to the Newfoundland west coast. The health, safety and environmental impacts of fracking are not only local but are also provincial, national and global. The fracked oil and the chemical waste will be transported outside the drilling sites through, and to, other areas of our province and elsewhere. Any legitimate, democratic community public consultations regarding hydraulic fracturing should not be limited to just Stephenville and Corner Brook and should be at least provincial in scope.

*Bob Diamond*