

Derrick Dalley announces fracking review panel

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The Newfoundland and Labrador government is going to appoint an independent panel to investigate the possibility of fracking in the province.

The decision comes as a number of proposals are in the works to explore for oil and gas on the west coast using the controversial process. Opponents fear fracking would affect Gros Morne National Park, among other areas.

Natural Resources Minister Derrick Dalley admits it's both an environmental and political issue.

He announced the panel in the district of St. George's-Stephenville East where at least one company wants to use fracking. A byelection is set for the district on Aug. 26.

"It's very important that I get this done now because it is an election issue here on the ground and it is important for people to understand where the candidate, where our party, and where our government stands on this issue," he said.

St. John's East NDP MHA George Murphy, meanwhile, says it's sad that it took a byelection in St. George's-Stephenville East to push the issue to the forefront.

"Surprised again that they made this announcement during the byelection. It's obvious to me that they've been hearing this at the door," he said.

The panel will be given a year to finish its work.

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