

Editorial: Fracking wars

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An information session in Port au Port East this week didn't give those in attendance the ban on hydraulic fracturing that they'd hoped for, it likely gave them the next best thing.

Of the 85 recommendations in a report by the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydraulic Fracturing Review Panel, 17 were flagged as "red-stage," and would require a lot of work and money by government agencies or the oil industry. It's not likely fracking will happen any time soon.

Ray Gosine, the panel chairman, was quick to point out hydraulic fracturing will not go ahead without a social license — in other words, without the majority of the people in the area where fracking would take place would have to agree to it.

The panel commissioned a survey to carry gauge public opinion, which indicated there was no majority support for the controversial oil and gas extraction method.

Despite the panel only suggesting there be a "pause" on hydraulic fracturing, there was a general consensus that there is very little taste for it going ahead.

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The Port au Port/Bay St. George Fracking Awareness Committee and its supporters, including Aboriginal Peoples, seem to have put forward their points in a big way without actually getting a total ban. But with the province in a state of turmoil when it comes to its finances and the value of a barrel of oil still below \$50 with little signs of it rebounding anytime soon, it's safe to say it will be a while before hydraulic fracturing would be approved. The price would have to rebound to \$85 a barrel or more to even make it feasible.

Stephenville-Port au Port MHA John Finn said the provincial government's policy on hydraulic fracturing hasn't changed, and government is still not accepting any applications for it. He said this won't change overnight.

While the ban hasn't been realized, the fracking awareness committee still won its battle.

Getting a total ban will take more time, but this report shows it may just be achievable.

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