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Fracking report set for release to public Tuesday

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As members of the Port au Port/Bay St. George Fracking Awareness Group await the release of a report from the provincial hydraulic fracturing review panel, the group insists there should be a ban on the practice.

The review panel, led by chair and lead writer Ray Gosine, is set to present the report to Natural Resources Minister Siobhan Coady on Monday.

Graham Oliver, a spokesman for the awareness group, believes the oil industry has controlled the public message on hydraulic fracturing, saying the oil and gas extraction method was safe and well-regulated.

“Today citizens are more informed about the harmful effects associated with hydraulic fracturing and the majority are no longer accepting the Pollyanna narrative of industry,” said Oliver.

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He hopes Gosine’s report will pay close attention to what’s happening in other jurisdictions where hydraulic fracturing was put under the microscope.

Oliver said following the release of the Wheeler Report on hydraulic fracturing in Nova Scotia in August 2014, that province’s Natural Resources minister announced a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. In December 2014, New York’s governor followed the advice of his chief medical officer and brought in a ban on hydraulic fracturing in that state. In February of this year, the New Brunswick Commission on Hydraulic Fracturing delivered its comprehensive report to government, which resulted in SWN Resources cancelling its plans to explore for shale gas.

Last month, Quebec Premier Phillippe Couillard expressed his displeasure with the controversial method of oil and gas extraction, said Oliver, and that province will concentrate on clean energy and investing in renewables.

Marion Sampson, chair of the fracking awareness group, said it has been a challenging three years getting word out on the harmful effects of fracking.

She hopes Gosine has heard the voice of the people who presented written and verbal submissions to the panel.

“With over 95 per cent of the more than 500 submissions to the panel expressing dissatisfaction with fracking, it’s obvious that there is no social license to proceed with hydraulic fracturing in this province,” said Sampson.

Gosine will discuss his report at a public meeting in Port au Port East at 6 p.m. Tuesday.

Oliver expects a large audience at Maria Regina Parish Hall to hear what the panel is recommending to government.

While Oliver hopes the report will put an end to hydraulic fracturing once and for all, he says his group has expressed its displeasure with the composition of the panel, and is therefore very concerned about what Gosine will recommend to Coady.

The panel’s full report will be posted online Tuesday for the public to review:

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