

Hydraulic fracturing review panel makes stop in Corner Brook

Dave Kearsy (/Author-Dave-Kearsy/345/1)

Published on October 17, 2015



© Dave Kearsy/The Western Star So, she took a hard look at the facts to determine where she stood

Robin Durnford outlines her concerns about fracking to members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydraulic Fracturing Review Panel at the Glynmill Inn in Corner Brook on Friday.

Robin Durnford admits she's no scientist, but she believes she's highly skilled in research methodology and evaluation of evidence.

on hydraulic fracturing in her back yard.

Durnford, a Corner Brook professor and poet, was one of the presenters at Friday's public consultation session held by the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydraulic Fracturing Review Panel at the Glynmill Inn.

Enclosing a poem about fracking with her written submission, Durnford — who noted she was representing herself — outlined a number of reasons why she didn't see the oil and gas extraction method as a good thing for western Newfoundland.

She checked out studies on fracking and she found that most of them actually competed against each other, and many were paid for by players in the oil industry.

She was alarmed to realize people are still debating the pros and cons of the issue when there is no scientific consensus on fracking.

"When the public health of the community is at stake, when mothers have to give their children water near fracked wells, there should be a scientific consensus that the practice is safe," she said to loud applause from the audience.

"Why would you experiment with the health and safety of our children and not your own?"

Durnford also had a number of exchanges with engineers and scientists, who she said painted a grim picture of fracking the Gulf of St. Lawrence as ill-conceived at best and madness at worst.

“I’m not anti-development, but my conclusion is that the cost of this type of risky development would be too high,” she said. “We would be guinea pigs in a grand experiment by an increasingly desperate and dying industry.”

The majority of the crowd that attended Friday’s session were opposed to fracking. Most of the speakers made it known they weren’t impressed with the make-up of the five-member review panel because there was no representation from women, indigenous people or the local area where people have a keen sense of the issues of concern.

Angela Giles, Atlantic regional organizer for the Council of Canadians, said protection of water resources is something dear to the hundreds of Newfoundlanders the council represents.

Giles wanted to ensure those in the room had an understanding of the enormous amount of water used in the fracking process, pointing out that a fracking project in this province could require up to 200 million litres of water. She also noted that there have been many drinking water advisories in the province in the past couple of years, so permitting fracking could further threaten water supplies through contamination and through the risk of literally running the well dry.

“Fracking uses unsustainable amounts of water,” said Giles.

Twitter: @WS_SportsDesk