

## NDP plugs away at fracking review panel



[Ashley Fitzpatrick](#)

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### New legislation relevant to discussion: MHA George Murphy

**NDP MHA George Murphy said Tuesday it is not too late for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to add a specialist in public health to its hydraulic fracturing — fracking — review panel.**

Speaking with The Telegram, Murphy highlighted the recently completed review of the province's Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA).

Proposed legislation to come out of the ATIPPA review, he noted, includes a public interest override that speaks directly to the importance of public health. He said the proposed changes, already accepted in principle by the government, include — in Section 9(3) — a call for proactive disclosure of information when there is a risk of significant harm to the environment, or to the health and safety of an individual or group.

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“So that would probably go for chemicals that are being used on roadside brush clearing, it could be used for fracking chemicals. ... That's my translation of that particular section,” he said.

Beyond whether or not fracking fluids are covered, Murphy said it is all also relevant in discussing the appointees to the fracking review panel.

“If government is going to recognize public health as a concern in the legislation, then it should also recognize public health as a concern for not being on the panel,” he said.

In the House of Assembly, where the NDP MHA has previously taken issue with panel appointments, he gained little traction with his latest points, as he closed out question period.

Natural Resources minister Derrick Dalley responded to Murphy, saying the named fracking review panel is a collection of highly qualified experts. Any other individuals, including doctors or public-health experts who might like to add information for consideration, will have the opportunity to do so as the panel does its work, he said.

The province's fracking review is focused on the potential effects of the use of hydraulic fracturing in oil and gas exploration and development on the west coast of Newfoundland.

As for public health being a concern, Dalley said he believes the Progressive Conservative government has demonstrated it “will do what is right” whenever public safety is at issue.

“With respect to fracking itself, I look forward to the panel doing their work and I really wish the member opposite would do the same, Mr. Speaker,” he said.


The panel held a first meeting by late January and, as previously reported, a website for use in the review was in development at that time. The review panel is being guided by terms of reference set by the province. It has until Oct. 10 to file its final report.

The panel members are: Ray Gosine, associate vice-president (research) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN); Graham Gagnon, a professor at Dalhousie University and expert in water management; Maurice Dusseault, a professor in the department of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Waterloo; Wade Locke, a professor of economics at MUN; and Kevin Keough, a former head of biochemistry at MUN and head of Kevin Keough Consulting.

[afitzpatrick@thetelegram.com](mailto:afitzpatrick@thetelegram.com)

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