

Report should result in ban on fracking: Graham Oliver

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Anti-fracking advocate Graham Oliver is seen in this recent file photo.

File photo

Peter Fenwick pleased panel didn't shut the door on hydraulic fracturing

Looking at the recommendations in the report by the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydraulic Fracturing Review Panel, Graham Oliver believes it should result in a ban on the controversial process for extracting petroleum.

Oliver, a member of the Port au Port/Bay St. George Fracking Awareness Group said the group's stance has always been in favour of a ban. He said if the provincial government doesn't agree with a ban, it should at least legislate a moratorium.

The long-awaited panel report was released Tuesday morning. There are 17 recommendations flagged as "red-stage," meaning they must be implemented before lifting the moratorium on accepting applications for hydraulic fracturing.

"If you look at those, they are enough alone to have a ban on hydraulic fracturing, especially when you look at some of the work that would be required to be done," said Oliver.

Read the report online: www.nlhfrp.ca (<http://www.nlhfrp.ca>).

One recommendation that stood out for Oliver called for complete health impact assessments, which would likely take years to compile. Another is the potential impact of spills.

"Government only needs to look to Shoal Point and see what's happening there to know about spills and well bore integrity," he said.

While the group is pleased to see Gros Morne National Park is flagged in the report as a protected area, Oliver said the members would not be happy to see fracking in Port au Port Bay.

“If hydraulic fracturing is seen as being harmful in the national park, it must also be in Port au Port Bay,” he said. “If they were to go ahead with it, then it would be like treating us like second-class citizens.”

Oliver was concerned that “the duty to consult aboriginals” was not addressed by the panel review.

Members of the review panel were in the Port au Port, Stephenville and Corner Brook areas Tuesday and Wednesday to meet with individuals and groups who want a briefing on the report.

Fenwick pleased review doesn't shut door on fracking

Cape St. George Mayor Peter Fenwick, an advocate of hydraulic fracturing, is pleased the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydraulic Fracturing Review Panel's report didn't recommend a ban on the practice.

Instead, the panel recommended extending the “pause” on the controversial method of extracting oil from underground shale rock.

“The report was a lot more positive than some people thought it would be,” said Fenwick. “In a province that's billions of dollars in debt, we can't afford to say no to anything that would create development.”

Fenwick said he is aware, with the current oil prices, that there would be no oil development relating to hydraulic fracturing unless prices went up to about \$85 a barrel or more. From his perspective, this oil companies an opportunity to go over the geology of the area and how the companies would fit in with communities.

“(Companies) have to be much more supportive of the community if hydraulic fracturing were ever to take place,” Fenwick said.

As chair of the Southwest Coast Joint Council, Fenwick said his interest was piqued that the review panel agreed improvements to the road system in the area were necessary if the oil development were to take place.

Fenwick said the joint council has been pushing for improvements to White's Road and the Hansen Highway for years, and this oil development could help in that regard.

He's glad the door is not “shut” on hydraulic fracturing and hopes eventually it will happen in the area.

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