

Review panel stacked with pro-frackers, says Greg Malone

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 26, 2015 7:02 AM NT Last Updated: May 26, 2015 7:02 AM NT

Some activists are unhappy with the review panel chosen by government to evaluate the safety of hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, on the province's west coast.

The Newfoundland and Labrador government announced last August that it was appointing an independent review panel to investigate the possibility of fracking to extract oil and gas.

- [Derrick Dalley announces fracking review panel](#)

That decision came following a number of proposals to explore for oil and gas on the west coast. Opponents have expressed fears that fracking could negatively affect Gros Morne National Park, among other areas.

Some environmental and citizen groups are now voicing concerns that none of the five panelists selected by government are women, or represent First Nations or people from the west coast of the province.

Calls for more female representation

Paula Graham, with the social action group Council of Canadians, is worried the panelists won't look at the long-term health consequences or the ethics of fracking.

She refers to such panels as "manels," because the group is entirely comprised of men.

"White, male, university educated, land-owning — that's more or less who makes all of our public decisions and that's just weird. Why are we only drawing from such a small percentage of our population?" she asked.

Actor Greg Malone is with a coalition of environmental groups calling for the review to be scrapped unless it examines the broader implications of fracking.

"[The panel is] composed of industry people who've already said they support fracking, there's no medical people on the panel, and yet the whole thing is about the health effects of fracking. There's no medical science in here — it's a farce," Malone said.

- [Famous Canadians call for no-fracking zone near Gros Morne](#)

The panelists have backgrounds in bio-chemistry, economics and engineering — and one holds several fracking patents.

"We are now going to send out a pretend panel with its mind already made up to pretend to examine the very real dangers involved in hydraulic fracturing," said Malone.

Comparisons with Nova Scotia

Maurice Dussault, a professor at the University of Waterloo, insists the fracking review will be objective.

Still, compared to the panel he sat on in Nova Scotia, he concedes the review in Newfoundland is "narrower in focus."

A similar fracking review in Nova Scotia was chaired by panelists who were nominated by a variety of groups with a stake — from industry to First Nations.

However, in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature on Monday, Natural Resources Minister Derrick Dalley defended his government's approach.

"As minister, I'm not going to intervene with the work of the panel, and the decision on fracking has not been made." he said.

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