

Time to prepare for fracking, says Cape St. George mayor

By Lindsay Bird, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 04, 2016 5:58 AM NT Last Updated: Jun 04, 2016 5:58 AM NT

A mayor on the west coast of Newfoundland says Tuesday's release of a [report on hydraulic fracturing](#) in the area represents an opportunity to explore the industry, instead of walking away from it.

The report by an independent, volunteer panel did not wholeheartedly endorse or reject fracking the Green Point shale reserves.

It pointed to numerous unanswered questions about its geology, as well as industry infrastructure and regulations, recommending those issues be further explored before a decision on fracking could be made.

- [Fracking not 'a game changer' for N.L., says independent report](#)
- ['It's playing Russian roulette': Fracking recommendations met with opposition](#)

"From my perspective, the fact that they didn't slam the door shut and bolt it was extremely important. Because now we can still start looking for the future," Peter Fenwick, mayor of Cape St. George and a local business owner, told CBC Radio's *Corner Brook Morning Show*.

"Don't forget we're a province that is desperately broke, and on that basis to actually close the door on an industry, on west coast oil development, without really having solid scientific evidence that it could never be done properly is just irresponsible."

To Fenwick, the worst thing the province could do with the report is nothing.

"What I'm fearful of is that they'll look at the report and say, we don't got any money, we're not going to do anything. That's nonsense."

Years to prepare

The report's panel stated that economically, fracking isn't viable at \$49 US a barrel and still unattractive at about \$85 US.

"There is a time period here, between now and whenever it goes up to that level, that we can address the concerns, the legitimate concerns," said Fenwick.

"Then we can make a decision. Do we go ahead with it? Have we answered all the questions? Do we have the safeguards in place? And if we do, then maybe it's time to say we need this industry."

Fenwick said the unique geology that leads to uncertainty about its fracking potential could also draw in specialists from around the world to study it.

"At the very end of it, they may decide there's just too many geological abnormalities on the Green Point shale that they're looking at to ever actually go ahead with fracking, but they've got to determine that first," he said.

Getting road ready

The report pointed out that another significant obstacle to development is the poor state of area roads, which are unfit to carry significant industrial traffic.

"It's time for us to address that issue now," said Fenwick. "I know it's going to be federal money, because at this point there's no provincial money."

He said the province should push for a funding partnership with Ottawa, similar to the building of the Trans Canada Highway decades ago.

"They have to argue, look, this is big industrial development... it's the kind of thing that in the long range

has the potential to be an economic generator for the province on a long term basis."

Fenwick said he and other municipal leaders in the area have argued unsuccessfully for years for roads in the Stephenville and Port au Port areas to be fixed.

Improving municipal infrastructure, as well as working with local towns on their concerns about fracking, would go a long way towards possible future industry, argued Fenwick.

"We need to have more support on the community level for this kind of development, assuming it's safe."

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