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SELECT COMMITTEE REGARDING THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

Public Hearings: Evidence

Tuesday, June 24, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.

Chair: Patti McLeod

**SELECT COMMITTEE
REGARDING THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF
HYDRAULIC FRACTURING**

Chair: Patti McLeod
Vice-Chair: Lois Moorcroft

Members: Hon. Currie Dixon
Darius Elias
Sandy Silver
Jim Tredger

Clerk to the Committee: Allison Lloyd

Speakers: Tip Evans
Doug Martens
Scott Buchanan
Werner Rhein
Georgina Sydney
Alex Jean
Carol Geddes
David Hett

EVIDENCE**Teslin, Yukon****Tuesday, June 24, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.**

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Good afternoon. I would like to call to order the hearing of the Yukon Legislative Assembly's Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. We're going to start with the introduction of the Committee. I'm Patti McLeod, Chair of the Committee and the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Watson Lake.

Mr. Silver: I'm Sandy Silver. I'm the MLA for Klondike and leader of the Yukon Liberal Party.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I'm Currie Dixon. I'm the MLA for Copperbelt North and the Minister of Environment, Minister of Economic Development and minister responsible for the Public Service Commission.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm Lois Moorcroft. I'm the MLA for Copperbelt South and I'm the Vice-Chair of the Committee. I would like to welcome all of you and thank you for coming out this afternoon. I want to acknowledge that we're on the traditional territories of the Teslin Tlingit Council. I want to encourage you to participate to the extent you would like this afternoon. It's always great to hear from the public and that's why we're holding these hearings. Thank you.

Mr. Elias: Good afternoon. My name is Darius Elias. I'm the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. It's a pleasure to be in Teslin again and to see a lot of familiar faces. I'm looking forward to hearing your views and concerns today.

Mr. Tredger: Good afternoon. My name is Jim Tredger. I'm the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. It is a pleasure to be in the town of Teslin and the traditional territory of the Tlingit and the Teslin Tlingit Council. I'm honoured to be here. I look forward to hearing your stories, your thoughts and your deliberations to help us as the Committee looks at the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing. Thank you for coming out.

Chair: I would also like to introduce Allison Lloyd, who is the Clerk to the Committee; Dawn Brown, who is helping us with registration, also a staff member of the legislative committee; and of course our sound and recording staff.

On May 6, 2013, the Yukon Legislative Assembly adopted Motion No. 433, thereby establishing the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. The Committee's purpose, or mandate, is set out in the motion, and it includes a number of interconnected responsibilities. The Committee has decided to fulfill its mandate in a three-phase approach.

Firstly, the Committee endeavoured to gain a science-based understanding of the technical, environmental, economic and regulatory aspects of hydraulic fracturing, as well as Yukon's current legislation and regulations relevant to the oil and gas industry.

Secondly, the Committee pursued its mandate to facilitate an informed public dialogue for the purpose of sharing

information on the potential risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing. The Committee invited experts to share their knowledge over four days of proceedings which were open to the public and are now available on our website.

Finally, the third stage of the Committee's work is gathering input from the Yukon public, First Nations, stakeholders and stakeholder groups. This is the purpose of today's hearing and the 11 other hearings in the communities across the territory that we have yet to do. This is our second hearing. The first one was yesterday in Watson Lake. After these hearings, the Committee will be in a position to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislative Assembly.

A summary of the Committee's activities to date is available at the registration table. All the information the Committee has collected, including presentations from experts on various aspects of hydraulic fracturing, is available on the Committee's website.

The Committee will not be presenting information on the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing at this hearing. The time allotted will be devoted to hearing from as many Yukoners as possible. We have allotted five minutes per speaker, but given that we don't have 30 speakers lined up, please speak at your leisure.

If you would like to present your opinion to the Committee, please ensure that you have registered at the registration table. Please note that this hearing is being recorded and transcribed. Everything you say will be on the public record and posted on the Committee's website.

I would like to welcome everyone in the audience and ask that you respect the rules of this hearing. Visitors are not allowed to disrupt or interfere in the proceedings. Please refrain from making noise, including comments and applause, and please mute your electronic devices. Thank you very much.

I'm going to start with perhaps Alex Jean. Would you like to address the Committee?

Unidentified speaker: (inaudible)

Chair: Tip Evans, please. You may begin whenever you're ready.

Mr. Evans: Well, I would like to thank the Committee for giving the people of Teslin an opportunity to voice their opinion on this, I think, very important issue. If it comes down to a vote, I vote no — absolutely not, never. So if that's not strong enough: no, no, no, no.

History is filled with people needing to get the job or get this or get that. The Alaska Highway, which was an important event to help win a world war, has left devastation along its sides and under it and next to it and the Canadian government admits today that it can't clean up the mess that it's left. The movement to nuclear power back in the '50s and '60s — we've seen the ramifications of that stuff. When you open the door to unknown downstream efforts — you know, how many meltdowns does one planet have to give to teach us a lesson?

This just another example of industry or pseudo-science or some type of perceived need that we must get this out of

the ground and get it into somebody's gas tank so their life is not disrupted. That is a falsehood. That is not economics. That is not looking after this planet we live on.

This world is not a sponge to be sucked dry. There are some things that don't need to happen. All the energy that's going into this technology, using oil, gas, for our energy consumption — if we put that energy into alternate fuel sources, renewable fuel sources, we would have a better planet.

Again, no, no, no. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Does any other member of the public wish to address the Committee?

Unidentified speaker: (inaudible)

Chair: Please state your name for the record.

Mr. Martens: My name is Doug Martens, and I came down here to speak. I only found out about the meeting this morning — so rather timely.

I think if you were to ask the question, "What is the most valuable resource the Yukon has?" and, discounting people for a moment, I would suggest that water is one of the most valuable assets the Yukon has. There are many other things — minerals, gold and so on, gas, oil — but water is becoming a scarce commodity. Clean water, worldwide, is becoming a very scarce commodity. Fracking is an extremely destructive practice. It's not just a green bias, or something like that. I've talked to a lot of people who have worked in the oil patch, and they basically, with the same voice, have said to keep it out of the Yukon — just keep it out of here.

One employee was working — I'll leave his name out of it — for an oil company and he still is, but they had a lot of toxic chemicals to dispose of and he was told to dump them on the ground. You can put all the regulations and all the safety features into the mix that you want, but when nobody is looking and you are 300 miles away and you've got a disposal problem, it's going to probably be dealt with in the most expedient means possible.

I'm given to believe there are over 500 chemicals in the frack water as it is injected into the ground. One of them is nitro, and I was told — unconfirmed — that actually what is happening is that the water, when it's pumped down with force, it's not only pumped under pressure but it's also ignited, so there is actually an explosive factor to the fracking activity.

I think the toxic factor is well-covered in the media and on the Internet. Basically, we need a lot more respect for what we have and for future generations, and I hope enough people vote no, and I hope the governing authorities respect the wishes of the people of the Yukon, because I think that, so far, we're well into a high percentage of people that do not wish to have this brought into the Yukon.

It might be a little hypocritical to drive a vehicle down here to a meeting and suggest that this doesn't need to happen, but I stand by my words on that. There are other ways of getting around without the LNG back-door sort of method that was used by converting the diesel generators to LNG in Whitehorse. The next argument is going to be that it's too

expensive to truck. We have natural gas all around us. We might as well extract that. It just doesn't give a good taste.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there any other member of the public who would like to address the committee?

Sir, please state your name for the record.

Mr. Buchanan: It is Scott Buchanan. I'm not used to microphones. I've been watching and reading with, I guess, an open mind and a lot of interest certainly over the last year or so — everything that has been in the media, government releases on the whole fracking and exploration question. One of the things that I noticed that has given me a lot of concern — one is the use of language in the communication. Language is a powerful, powerful thing. So, depending on how words are used, you can say one thing and people understand something else. I've seen that time and time again in presentations on either side of the fracking debate, and I see people swallowing something sometimes when words are carefully crafted. I mean, that's part of the art of diplomacy and it's part of the reality of politics, but I think that, in this case, the risks are very — I mean, we've got one chance to get it right or make a colossal mess of things.

The other side of that is that I think we have not really had the benefit, here in the Yukon and by and large across Canada, to have much transparency brought to the public in a democratic process about international trade deals. So we have seen cases already where provinces, municipalities have been sued by foreign interests because they have stood up through an assessment process and said, "No, we do not want this in our community" and the multinational developer said, "Well, fine. We'll sue you, because we are guaranteed that."

For any exploration leases that are granted to foreign interests, what confidence do we have that sovereign interests and democratic rights — health, safety issues that are intrinsic here in the Yukon or elsewhere — will actually take precedence? Or is that going to be flushed down and will we not know about it until it's too late?

I would urge the Committee to look large and wide and take a broad view of those considerations because we are not just in the Yukon any more. We are tied into much bigger stakes, and I'm more than a little concerned about what they may translate into here.

Chair: Thank you very much.

If there is no one else who wishes to speak at this time, perhaps we will break for 15 minutes and maybe give you a chance to reconsider, and then we will come back.

Committee will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order please. Thank you everyone. It was very fortuitous that we took a little break — we do have some additional speakers, I'm very happy to say.

Werner Rhein, would you like to address the Committee at this time?

Mr. Rhein: Okay. My name is Werner Rhein. I'm living at Mount Lorne Hamlet. I'm involved in trying to avoid that we destroy our beautiful Yukon since about three years now.

The main problem we are fighting is what I heard this morning on the radio that the majority of the people in Watson Lake is for fracking. Now in the 10 minutes I'm here, I hear exactly the opposite. There is so much false information out, it's just not funny. In not just my opinion — in the opinion of more and more people every day, we don't need fracking. We've got enough energy to keep our lifestyle. Just about two weeks ago, I came across a new development from an Israeli company. They developed an aluminum-based battery that's holding 100 times the energy of the battery that is now on the market. The car would be able — with the same weight and space — to drive 1,600 to 1,800 kilometres. If we can stack these batteries up, we can collect solar and wind power, but if there is none at night or when there is no wind or no sun, we can draw from there.

We can't do it from one day to the other. It's the same thing. The fossil fuel industry or the energy we have available right now did not get developed in one day. It took 100-plus years. One hundred years ago, there was not a gas station on every corner. People had to go to the drugstore to get gas for their vehicles.

Right now, Tesla — the top electric car manufacturer on this earth — is putting every day a new charging station up in Europe. With the new battery from the Israeli company, we can store enough energy to shut a lot of the conventional dirty energy down, so we don't need fracking. We can keep our beautiful Yukon clean. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Georgina Sydney, please. Whenever you're ready, please.

Ms. Sydney: My name is Koxuhan Georgina Sydney. I'm from Teslin Tlingit Council.

I've been hearing quite a bit about fracking. From the information that I have gathered from different presentations that I've seen, it's going to devastate the Yukon. In our area in Teslin, I notice the water levels are going down all around here. There's places where we've had ponds for years, ever since I was a little girl. Those ponds are drying up. The amount of water that you need to do this — we don't have it. It's just going to cause a lot of devastation in our territory. The chemicals that you use — it will pollute what water we do have.

The other thing is — it has probably been mentioned in your other meetings that you've had — in our land claims agreement — in the water chapter, we stated that we will not damage water downstream from our area. By the same token, the water upstream cannot be damaged either. You need First Nations' approval to carry on with fracking if it's going to happen. I can't see it happening in our area. However, the water runs down and it might affect us.

So I'm totally against it. I think about my grandchildren, my children, my great-grandchildren — I am a great-grandmother. I think about their future and what will be here

for them if we just keep going on this trail that we've been going on, where we just take resources and use it and put nothing back in place of it.

In my lifetime, I've noticed so much change in our area. It's really scary for me. I look at my grandchildren and I don't want to feel guilty for leaving a mess for them. So I would rather we do it now and not leave it up to them to try and clean this mess that we made. You know, the earth is only so big and it can provide only so much. We just keep taking and taking and not putting anything back. It has really affected our life here in the Yukon.

That's all I wanted to say. Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Alex Jean, whenever you're ready please.

Mr. Jean: Thank you. Me, I see in my life, I work very hard to save this planet — me and my buddies. I did tree planting, picking (inaudible) and I don't know want to lose my water. I don't want to lose my trees and I sure don't know want to lose my berries neither. I call the Yukon the paradise compared to other provinces in this country. This is a paradise. An example, I see hell in Fort McMurray when I visit this place. One of my friends one day — he knew I was not working in camp and he said, "Come to my camp. I want you to see what's going on over there."

I ride for two hours. What I saw from my eyes, I was very, very, very, very, very sad — not happy at all. I work hard to save the planet and I see others just going to be there to destroy the planet. It was hell. I was shaking and I'm shaking right now. See, everything is dying. The water is black. The trees are black. Everything is black. Like, it's no and no and no. We don't need to see that project coming. We need to think for the next generation because if we continue like this, the planet is going to disappear. That means everybody will disappear. That's it.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Carol Geddes, please — whenever you're ready.

Ms. Geddes: Good afternoon everybody. This is a very, very heavy subject for our community. I was born in a tent by the lake here. It was this lake that nourished me. It was this lake that nourished many of our people here. It was the clean water of this lake that we used to fish, that we used to travel on, that was our landmark. It means everything to us who live here.

I lived away for many years. I went to Ottawa and Montreal to study. There was much I loved about the city, but there was always something that pulled me here to home, to Teslin. It was this land and the life that this land gives to us and still tries to give to us. In some ways, it's not able to do that because of interferences by people — by people who should have nothing but gratitude for this land, but we don't have that gratitude. We simply use it. We use it and use it.

As somebody just mentioned a few minutes ago, what do we give back? We don't give much back. Often we can't even give a thank you back to the land.

Our relationship with this land is not simply as a resource. Our relationship with this land is sacred, and there are people

in this room who deeply understand that. I know Darius from Old Crow really understands that because it's the caribou that give it to them, and so they sustain their land. That's what we want to do here too. Not only the Yukon, but Canada, needs to create a new relationship with this land, a sacred relationship with this land, to understand this land and to let that land embrace us, let that land nourish us.

For me, I'm in the last quarter of my life now and I acknowledge that. I know that, but there are small children here who haven't even had a chance to do the kinds of things that we've had the privilege to do — to fish, to open up a fish and see its healthy flesh that we're going to use to sustain us. Children need that opportunity.

When I talk about Canada needing to learn this lesson, that's very, very important to me because you — I understand the Yukon Legislative Assembly is affected and infected by an ethic all of Canada seems to uphold, and that is that money is everything — that it is about economic growth, continuous economic growth.

There are many economists now who argue against that, who say: What is this thing? Why are we holding up the god of growth and detracting from all other values? We can't continue to do that. We've got to stop someplace. Money isn't everything. We can't eat money and we need to hear, really, what the people of this land are saying when they talk about the fears. These are real, deep fears.

I've spoken to people in this community recently about this very issue. There is an elder I spoke to who was so upset, so horrified, when I explained what I know about fracking and about how there is no safety. There's no safety. People — don't try to tell us that. Don't try to sell us this because of your ideas about how safe it can be. No. Make no mistake, this is about money, and money isn't everything. We must protect this land.

Teslin Tlingit Council was not able to be here today because of a very important meeting in Haines Junction — the general council for CYFN. I do want to tell you, though, that TTC is preparing their own legislation against fracking. This is a very serious issue for us and we are — I think somebody mentioned a few minutes ago that this may not affect our land directly. I don't agree with that. Any place in the Yukon that is going to be used as a toilet is going to affect us. We are all downstream — we are all downstream — make absolutely no mistake about that.

There are those of us who will fight this very hard. We need to instead just shift tactics, shift our direction. The opportunities for renewable resources are enormous. Why don't we look at those? We must look at renewable resources. We are up to our ears in the wealth of the forest here. There are technologies that are so advanced now from European countries and other places that will allow us to exploit our resources in a healthy way. We need to put interest, we need to put research, into those areas and we need to support those areas in order to protect our land.

I have taken quite a few minutes of your time and I do thank you for it. I wish you luck on your continuing work. I

really do hope that you've heard this message very strongly, because I mean it with all my heart. I know there are many people here who feel the very same way.

Gunilshish. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there any other member of the public who would like to address the Committee?

Please state your name for the record.

Mr. Hett: My name is David Hett. I've lived in the area for 41 years. I just have a couple of things to say. First of all, I would like to add my voice to the anti-fracking part of what you're hearing — like 110-percent anti-fracking.

The second thing I think the Committee should look at are some of the neo-conservative and neo-liberal ideas that are driving this process, that go far beyond the borders of Teslin. I really think that you should look at those things. I think that's important.

One last thing: all of you sitting there today are using those plastic bottles. I hope you're aware that it takes 2,000 times as much energy to make and fill one of those plastic bottles than it does to turn a tap on.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much. Is there anyone else?

I want to thank Teslin for its participation here today. It has been very informative and I'm quite happy with the number of participants who did decide to speak to us. It's always helpful.

I would like to remind everyone that, if you weren't comfortable speaking in this format, or perhaps you have some additional thoughts, you are invited to submit your comments on-line. There's a comment form — or you can write us a letter or e-mail. Any which way you're comfortable, we'd be happy to accept it, and please visit the website. All of the information from today's hearing, from Watson Lake's hearing and from all additional hearings will be posted there, and the audio files will be uploaded.

So please stay tuned and thanks for your interest.

The Committee adjourned at 1:55 p.m.