

# Fracking trip's itinerary released

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The final itinerary for the upcoming government fact-finding mission regarding hydraulic fracturing has one notable change.

The Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic fracturing is travelling

to Alberta from Jan. 6 to 8.

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, involves pumping pressurized water, sand and chemicals deep underground to blast apart rocks and release natural gas trapped inside.

When a draft itinerary from November was made public, some people raised concerns that the

committee was meeting with too many pro-fracking groups.

The final itinerary was released yesterday. It now includes a meeting with the Cochrane Area Under Siege Coalition, a vocal anti-fracking group from southwestern Alberta.

Don Roberts, chair of the group Yukoners Concerned

About Oil and Gas Exploration first raised the concern about the original itinerary.

He believes adding the Cochrane group is a positive step, but says the final itinerary is still off balance.

He said too many of the groups are related to the fracking industry.

"Unfortunately when they go to Alberta, you're already going with a loaded gun. You know that they're into fracking big time, you know that they are into fossil fuels big time so anything that is negative or critical of what they are doing is not going to necessarily come to the surface."

The committee, which includes MLAs Patti McLeod, Darius Elias, Currie Dixon, Lois Moorcroft, Sandy Silver and Jim Tredger, will be in Alberta from Jan. 6 to 8.

They will tour a hydraulic fracturing operation and a producing well site. They will meet with groups including the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Alberta Energy Regulator and Sundre Petroleum Operators Group and others.

Roberts questions whether the group will be able to get a balanced and fair perspective on their trip.

"I think the point is, if you see five or six groups that they're going to and it's all pro fracking and they're going to just see one that is not necessarily pro fracking, is that a balance?"

A meeting with Alberta Health

Services is also new to the itinerary.

Allison Lloyd, clerk of committees for the Yukon Legislative Assembly, said the final itinerary was revised and approved by the committee at its last meeting on December 16th.

Lloyd confirmed the Cochrane group was not on the original draft suggested by the Department of Energy Mines and Resources.

Meetings are confidential, Lloyd said, meaning she could not provide any more details on why the changes were made.

McLeod, the committee's chair, could not be reached for comment in time for today's deadline.

In an open letter sent to the media yesterday, she said one of the mandates of the Select Committee is to gain "a science-based understanding of the technical, environmental, economic and regulatory aspects of hydraulic fracturing."

"We believe that this tour and these meetings will help us achieve that goal," the letter said.

"While it was very difficult to decide which groups to meet with and how to spend our limited time in Calgary and Red Deer we believe that we have achieved a balanced schedule that allows us to hear from government regulators, industry experts, groups concerned about hydraulic fracturing, and academics."

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