

Fracking presentations included misleading statements

Re: the MGM Energy Corp. and Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers visit to Yukon (*Star*, Jan. 17).

Representatives of the oil and gas industry visited Whitehorse last week to address the chamber of commerce and give interviews to the media.

Contained within their addresses are several misleading statements and some troubling indications of industry's attitude towards Yukon.

The representative of MGM Energy Corp. said fracking does not pollute ground water, and that it is safe.

In contrast, the Yukon select committee on fracking heard from a family in Alberta who were badly harmed by fracking.

The representative from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) says they have drilled and fracked 171,000 wells with no contamination of drinking water.

Jessica Ernst, a retired Encana scientist, has amassed a compelling data base to refute that assertion.

A most troubling aspect of this

statement is that CAPP would appear to be confusing multi-stage slick water horizontal fracking here with the low-pressure kind of stimulation that was historically used to revive a conventional well.

Of the 171,000 wells referred to, only 6,000 have been fracked in the sense we understand it now.

CAPP also asserts that the shale boom in the U.S. has reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Well, this depends on how you count them.

For one thing, the figures quoted do not account for the methane leakage associated with fracking.

Neither does it account for the fact that U.S. coal mines simply switched from supplying U.S. power plants to foreign plants. Shale gas has not reduced coal mining; it has not reduced emissions.

CAPP says that less than one per cent of B.C. water licences are issued to the oil and gas industry.

This is because most fracking

operations in B.C. do not get water licences; they get "temporary" permits instead.

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A better comparison would be to Alberta, where 10 per cent of water licences go to the industry.

MGM Energy says we should rely on the science. On this note, I agree: the science is clear: fracking causes lots of problems, it is unsafe, and has never been properly regulated to protect human and environmental health. The question is whether the money that might flow to some Yukoners is worth it.

MGM Energy also "thinks

there is very little chance hydraulic fracturing will contaminate ground water anywhere in the world."

I suggest anyone who thinks that should come and check out B.C.-based hydrogeologist Dr. Gilles Wendling's presentation on precisely how this does happen.

He will be giving a free public lecture on Jan. 30 at 7 p.m. at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre in Whitehorse.

MGM's discussion of their operation in the Sahtu didn't mention how they bailed when required to undergo an environmental assessment.

They maintain that fracking as part of an exploration project

should not need an environmental assessment. That is not the way we do things here in Yukon.

MGM says Yukon can control the pace of development. This has not proved true anywhere else; it really would be naive of us to think that this time it will be different.

MGM concludes that we do not need to become a Fort Nelson.

I agree.

We like the Yukon just fine the way it is, thank you very much: frack-free.

Sebastian Jones

Energy Co-ordinator

Yukon Conservation Society

Dawson City

Let's consider electing elders

Once again, it is time to elect a new council for the Kwanlin Dun First Nation.

As we approach this decision, I have a concern that warrants reflection: could we not consider electing elders at this

time also?

In recent years, elders have been appointed from the council table by members of the council.

I feel it would more reflective of our membership if we

were to have one member of the Wolf clan and one member of the Crow clan serve as elected elders.

Leonard Gordon Sr.

Whitehorse

Fracking committee sets its schedule for hearing witnesses

By AINSLIE CRUICKSHANK
Star Reporter

Next week, the legislature's Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing will hear from eight groups in an attempt to foster a scientific understanding of fracking.

The proceedings will be presented publicly Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 in the legislature.

The first day of the public proceedings will include a presentation by Gilles Wendling, who has a doctorate in hydrology, experience assessing drinking water supplies and protecting groundwater resources.

The B.C. Oil and Gas Commission, the Pembina Institute, and EFLO Energy Inc. and Northern Cross, which have invested interest in natural gas reserves in the Yukon, will also present.

The Saturday presenters include

Bernhard Mayer, a geoscientist at the University of Calgary, Rick Chalurnyk, a geotechnical engineer from the University of Alberta, the Fort Nelson First Nation, and the National Energy Board.

The proceedings will run from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. both Friday and Saturday.

Each presenter will have 50 minutes to present to the fracking committee, followed by a 10-minute break, and 45

minutes for questions from the committee members.

The audience will have an opportunity to submit written questions for the presenters to the committee during each presentation.

Following questions by the committee members, a few questions from the public will be randomly selected and asked.

An open letter from the committee, chaired by Patti McLeod, the Yukon

Party MLA for Watson Lake, noted not all questions from the audience will be asked.

The letter and full schedule for the public proceedings are available at www.legassembly.gov.yk.ca/rbhf.htm.

The committee also plans to hold public meetings in Old Crow and Watson Lake, and possibly Whitehorse.

Those sessions have not yet been scheduled.

See letter, p. 7.