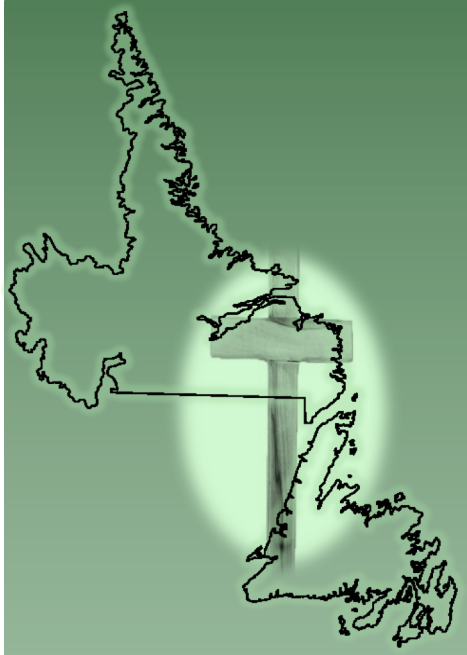

Presentation to the Permanent People's Tribunal on Human Rights, Fracking and Climate Change

Roman Catholic Religious Leaders of Newfoundland and Labrador

March 16, 2018

Roman Catholic Religious Leaders of Newfoundland & Labrador

* Archbishop – Roman Catholic Archdiocese, St. John's
* Bishop – Roman Catholic Diocese, Grand Falls
* Bishop – Roman Catholic Diocese, Corner Brook and Labrador
* Congregational Leadership Team – Sisters of Mercy
* Local leader – Christian Brothers, St. John's
* Local leader – Jesuits of Eastern Canada, St. John's
* Local leader – Redemptorists, St. John's
* Provincial Leadership Team – Presentation Sisters

OUR ASSUMPTION

To advise on the socio-economic and environmental implications

***of the hydraulic fracturing process*,**

is based

in social responsibility

and assurance of human rights.

OUR PRIMARY CONCERN

The impacts of hydraulic fracturing on the health of humans and human communities, environmental integrity and ecological sustainability are not yet known with certainty.

Our province does not have the sophisticated systems and processes to monitor and manage this uncertainty, the finances to create such systems and processes, or the capacity to sustain them while hydraulic fracturing is being carried out and after the wells are shut down.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

* Ecological Sustainability
* Stewardship
* Voices of Vulnerable Persons
* Collective Action
* Intergenerational Equity
* Precautionary Principle

INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

We do not inherit the earth from our fathers, we borrow it from our children. ***Inuit saying***

Justice between Generations **– We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.**

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 159

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

First used to guide the prevention of environmental degradation at the *United Nations Earth Summit* held in 1992 and noted in the *Rio Declaration,* Principle 15:

> **In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.**

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

This precautionary principle makes it possible to protect those who are most vulnerable and whose ability to defend their interests and to assemble incontrovertible evidence is limited.

If objective information suggests that serious and irreversible damage may result, a project should be halted or modified, even in the absence of indisputable proof.

***Laudato Si'*, 165**

KNOWN RISKS OF HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

- ✓ Depletion of fresh water
- ✓ Contamination of water (ground and surface)
- ✓ Degradation of air quality
- ✓ Pollution of water, land and air
- ✓ Handling, testing, transportation, treatment and disposal of wastewater
- ✓ Deforestation
- ✓ Danger for flora, fauna & fish
- ✓ Contaminated food chain
- ✓ Loss of habitat for plants and animals
- ✓ Rock cliff degradation and falling rock
- ✓ Earthquakes
- ✓ Escape of natural gas, especially methane
- ✓ Pollutants from equipment
- ✓ Carbon emissions

KNOWN RISKS OF INTRODUCTION OF ANY LARGE INDUSTRY

* Impact of large industry on existing industries and businesses (e.g., fishing, hunting, tourism)
* Understated impacts on road management systems, emergency preparedness services and health services
* Most vulnerable populations, including children and older persons, generally ignored in the planning processes
* “Boomtown effect” more intense in rural areas than in larger urban areas

KNOWN RISKS: BOOMTOWN EFFECT

Rapid change leading to social ills

* Increased rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually-transmitted infections, and domestic violence
* Inadequate supply and quality of housing
* Increased cost of living
* Increased community dissatisfaction
* Increased mental health & social services caseloads
* Increased hospital admissions
* Insufficient infrastructure
* Insufficient capacity in public services, including policing, local government, social services, and health care

UNKNOWN RISKS: HIGH LEVELS OF UNCERTAINTY

* Quality of rock in this area – ?shale rock along the west coast of Newfoundland several times thicker than rest of North America, broken up by moving tectonic plates, more difficult to fracture and to contain subsequent unintended extension of fracturing
* Impact of wastewater on geological formations for next 20 years
* Difficulty in monitoring rural vs. urban water supplies
* Lack of research on social determinants of health (more than clean water and healthy air)

UNKNOWN RISKS

* Assessment of health status and health risks from an industry which has insufficient long-term health-related data (see next slide)
* Monitoring completeness and transparency of incomplete and complex information
* Identification of true economic benefit = immediate financial advantage balanced with costs of related services during and after lifetime of the wells
* Capacity to ensure transparent community participation before, during and after the wells are in operation

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT [New Brunswick]

Seven areas of public health knowledge gaps related to hydraulic fracturing processes:

1. **Planning for social impacts**
2. **Health status studies**
3. **Health impact assessments**
4. **Chemical toxicity information on products used by the industry**
5. **Chemical toxicity information on wastes**
6. **Exposure data**
7. **Extent, location and rates of development**

LEARNINGS FROM SHOAL POINT LEAKAGE

* Reports of leakage in 2013 and in 2014 with no immediate action taken
* Complexities of divided responsibilities between two levels of government
* Suggested cause: natural fracturing of the rock
* "Strong potential that the oil is originating from, or near, a fourth well casing that has broken off, or was terminated at the time of drilling, below the surface at this location" (Report completed in August 2015 for Government)
* No assessment of potential impacts on humans, fish, etc.

LEARNINGS FROM OTHERS

Diverse jurisdictions who have made decisions to suspend or prohibit hydraulic fracturing:

* St. Lawrence Lowlands (environmental sensitivity similar to ours)
* Canadian provinces = Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec
* American states = Vermont, New York and Maryland
* Countries = France, Bulgaria, Germany, Scotland and Wales

FACTORS TO BE KEPT IN BALANCE

* A process known to cause damage to the environment
* Uncertainty connected to this unconventional oil and gas production process
* Lack of reliable evidence about the long term health effects of its implementation
* A sophisticated, expensive process needed to enforce the regulatory framework for public health protection and environmental monitoring

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

* Do we have the capacity and financial resources to monitor, assess and manage the environmental consequences?

* Do we have the capacity and financial resources in our health care system to monitor, assess and manage the health consequences?

* Do we have the capacity and financial resources to monitor, assess and manage the social consequences in an area in which traditional industries are fishing, farming, hunting and tourism?

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

* Are the voices and concerns of the most vulnerable people affected by hydraulic fracturing being heard?

* Do we have the capacity and financial resources to provide the level of independent research needed about the environmental, social, health, economic and policy issues today and into the future?

* Do we have the capacity and financial resources to hold the companies accountable before, during and after the hydraulic fracturing process?

ULTIMATE QUESTION

Will the financial benefit to be gained from hydraulic fracturing in Newfoundland and Labrador outweigh the costs to the health of persons and the environment?

GOING FORWARD

What approach can be taken to create space for the ongoing dialogue needed among the public, government and industry about

- **the results of your assessment**
- **the ongoing dialogue during the development, implementation and continuous evaluation of the process if approved**

The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all.

***Laudato Si'*, 95**