

Frequently Asked Questions

How has the final scope changed from the draft that went out for public comment?

The draft scope included topic areas for the review to include. The final scope defines what types of issues will be looked at under each topic area, based on the feedback received from Nova Scotians and ongoing work by the review team. Five of the six main issues or concerns raised by Nova Scotians were already in the draft scope.

The changes made in the final scope include:

- Expansion of the scope to include hydraulic fracturing in all oil and gas operations, not just in shale
- Addition to look into requiring the submission of engineering designs for a hydraulic fracture operation
- Addition to look into public disclosure requirements for additives used in hydraulic fracture operations
- A detailed description of the review scope items under each topic area to provide Nova Scotians with a clear picture of the extent of the review.

Why has government not implemented a ban or moratorium?

We do not currently have any hydraulic fracturing going on in the province, nor do we expect any over the course of this review. That's why it's a good time to do this review. Hydraulic fracturing is a regulated industrial activity in Nova Scotia and the review will help inform us on the effectiveness of our current rules and regulations and how best to proceed into the future.

Why is the review team not looking into whether hydraulic fracturing should be banned?

A ban or moratorium is more of an outcome of a review rather than part of it. Once the review is completed and all the information is in, we will have a better idea how best to proceed based on the science and facts. If the review team discovers something that would suggest hydraulic fracturing should not be allowed, that will come out in the review.

Why is government doing an internal review instead of an independent review?

We have expertise within government to do a technical and policy review of the facts and science. They will draw on external experts as needed. It is government's responsibility to continue to review best practices in other jurisdictions and our own processes and approvals to ensure we have the best rules and regulations in place going into the future.

Who is on the review committee?

This is a seven-member joint committee of the Departments of Environment and Energy (three from Energy and four from Environment). There is a co-lead from each department: for Energy it is Kim Himmelman, manager of regulatory and strategic policy, and for Environment it is Brent Baxter, manager of the pollution prevention branch. Other members of the committee include a geologist, hydrogeologist, an environmental engineer, environmental policy analyst, energy policy analyst and an aboriginal liaison.

Why not hold public consultations around the province?

This is a joint technical and policy review of the science and facts, not a public consultation. We have built in a process for public input, both through the public written comments on the scope and, later, on proposed regulatory changes. We were pleased to hear from the 279 Nova Scotians during the public comment period as to what they would like to see the review cover. Their comments have helped to inform this process.

Why not broaden the review to consider socio-economic impacts of oil and gas activity?

We are focused on the environmental implications of hydraulic fracturing so we can ensure we have the best and safest rules and regulations in place for Nova Scotia. This is not a review of onshore oil and gas industry.

What's next?

The review team can begin its work. The team will look at best practices in other jurisdictions and our own rules and regulations. Outside experts will be consulted as necessary. Nova Scotians will again have an opportunity to provide written comments when the regulatory changes are proposed. We expect to finish the review early in 2012.