

Testimony of Julia Walsh  
Founder and Director of Frack Action  
before the Joint Committee on Climate Action  
House of Oireachtas, Ireland  
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My name is Julia Walsh. I'm the founder and Campaign Director of Frack Action, a small NGO based in New York State, where I also live. I started Frack Action in 2010 because of the direct threat that fracking posed to my community. For 5 years, we worked with other grassroots organizations and NGO's to educate the public and our elected officials about the harms that fracking was inflicting on our neighbors in Pennsylvania. From New York, we were witnessing in real-time a dramatic increase of pollution and sickness for people and the environment in the areas where fracking was taking place.

Our campaigners worked with health professionals, who were studying the impacts that fracking was having across the United States. Now the vast majority of more than 1,500 peer-reviewed scientific studies demonstrate that drilling and fracking cause serious risks and harms to public health and the environment. In 2015, our Governor Andrew Cuomo listened to the science and banned fracking based on the risks to public health and the environment. Shortly thereafter, my organization was invited to come here and share the reports on the impacts of fracking by New York State's Departments of Public Health and the Environment with the public, press and elected officials.

As a 3rd generation Irish-American, I was relieved when my ancestral homeland banned fracking in 2017 -- protecting the people, water, air, land, animals and climate here. That courageous action made Ireland an international leader on this issue, although that is still under threat with potential fracking licenses in the North. Now, I have been invited back by campaigners to address the potential use of US fracked gas in Ireland and specifically the proposed Shannon LNG import terminal.

New York has had its own experience with LNG terminals and in 2015 our Governor Andrew Cuomo rejected the permit for the Port Ambrose LNG terminal and instead granted offshore wind licenses in that area. He said that, "My administration carefully reviewed this project from all angles, and we have determined that the security and economic risks far outweigh any potential benefits." New York State has also denied several massive fracked gas pipelines from Pennsylvania to go through New York because of the dangers these pipelines pose to our water, rivers, streams and wetlands as well as our climate. This is important because New York's decision to deny permits for fracking pipelines has been a factor in the decision that you face today. Quite simply, there is a glut of fracked gas in Pennsylvania that cannot be brought to market, financially speaking this gas is referred to as a 'stranded asset'.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated on October 2 during the Taoiseach's Questions that this gas for the Shannon LNG terminal is not necessarily from fracking. This is a misleading statement given the facts that we know.

According to New Fortress Energy's Filing at the US Securities and Exchange Commission on November 9, 2018, the corporation states that two-thirds of marketed gas production is from fracking. They also state that the gas intended for the Shannon LNG is from fracking in Pennsylvania. On page 9, they state "We are an integrated gas-to-power company that seeks to use "stranded" natural gas to satisfy the world's large and growing power needs". They detail on pages 9 and 14, how they are planning to build two plants to liquify the 3-4 million gallons of fracked gas per day for LNG export with potential to build five more liquefier plants with a 15 year contract to buy this fracked gas. One liquefier plant New Fortress Energy is building is in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, which is one of the most heavily fracked counties in PA. Many residents there are suffering from health ailments as a result. The liquefied fracked gas would then be transported by truck to a proposed LNG export terminal in the town of Gibbstown, PA, where there is enormous local opposition.

As many people and TD's have already stated, getting fracked gas from the United States, when there is law banning fracking in Ireland, reeks of hypocrisy. If Ireland imports fracked gas at the Shannon LNG terminal then you will be locking yourself into over a decade of complicity in harming people and children of Pennsylvania. In recent months, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, has investigated and found least 67 diagnoses of extremely rare cancers in children in just 4 rural, heavily-fracked counties of the state. Health professionals are very alarmed by this. There are now over 1,500 scientific studies and reports in the United States overwhelmingly show the harms of fracking. Those harms include disastrous impacts for the climate from the release of methane. As Professor Howarth stated, combining the processes of fracking and transport and distribution of LNG, the methane leakages make fracked gas LNG considerably worse for the climate than coal.

As we in the United States work to protect the public health and safety of Americans by banning fracking nationally, I ask this committee, members of the Dáil and the public to please continue speaking out and working together to stop this project from gaining the final permits and to pass a law banning all US fracked gas in Ireland.