

From: Karen Beazley
To: melissa.mlaoffice@gmail.com
Cc: [PublicOnlyCouncilEmail](#); [Kody Blois](#); [lisalachancemla](#)
Subject: Uranium exploration in Hants West and NS
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Honorable Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA Hants West;

I have grave concerns and several questions about the uranium exploration and mining initiatives in Nova Scotia. I live in Windsor, Hants County, not far from the so-called Millet Brook site identified in the Request for Proposals (RFP). This is a more widespread issue, however, as the negative impacts and health hazards from uranium mining can extend for hundreds of kilometers, through air, water, and dust particles.

Please stand with your constituents and our Hants West district and push back against the uranium initiatives here and in all of NS. Below are some of my concerns and questions. They are shared by many others in our region, as demonstrated by more than 200 people showing up for an information session on May 31st in Vaughan, organized by a few concerned-citizen volunteers over just three days.

I urge you to consider these questions for yourself, discuss them with other MLAs, and raise them to the Premier and responsible Ministers.

- Nova Scotia is a small province with the second highest population density in Canada. Would you be comfortable with uranium mining in or near our community or near your home? Where in NS would this be acceptable?
- Why didn't the Provincial Government "engage or consult with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia prior to introducing significant changes in the mining sector that will directly impact the Mi'kmaq's section 35 rights"? (This question was also included in a letter to Tim Houston from the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs dated March 4, 2025).
- How will Nova Scotia's freshwater be protected if uranium mining goes forward? "Nearly half of all Nova Scotians (440,000) depend on well water, especially in rural communities. Leftover tailings (radioactive sediment and/or toxic fluid) must be stored in tailings ponds or in underground caverns" and risk groundwater contamination that leads to serious health issues. I worry about Hants West and other sites (and beyond) being left with contaminated water.
- I am concerned about the health of my family and community. CAPE NS (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment) has shared an [open letter](#) to Tim Houston that outlines health risks of uranium mining. For example, they stated that

uranium mining includes “health risks from radon gas, radioactive dust, and potential water contamination”. Further details are provided, below. Exploration also entails many such risks. How would these health risks be avoided or mitigated, and monitored?

- Is it fiscally responsible to have to pay to manage toxic radioactive waste with a half-life of 10,000+ years? What would be the environmental and health implications be if this toxic waste contaminates ground and well water? “Uranium mining and milling wastes will constitute an everlasting health hazard and will have to be monitored and managed in perpetuity at public expense” ([CAPE NS](#)).
- I do not support how Bill 6 was passed. Large changes in mandate need consultation from the public and the Mi’kmaw before proceeding. As the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaw Chiefs pointed out in their letter to the premier ([March 4, 2025](#)): “None of the announcements on fracking, uranium mineral exploration or lithium mining development were included in the Progressive Conservative party of Nova Scotia’s campaign platform during the past election. It is very concerning that our provincial government is proposing such dramatic changes in sectors for which they did not receive a mandate from the people of this province.”
- Why would NS consider uranium mining if precipitation and rainfall events exclude it from being able to be done safely, as determined by the US Supreme Court and scientists? The US Supreme Court has banned uranium mining in Virginia since 2019 because of Virginia’s high rainfall and intense storms. Nova Scotia has “higher precipitation than Virginia (1,300 mm a year as opposed to 1,000) and has had extreme rainfall events (notably 860 mm in July 2023) far exceeding those noted in Virginia”. Dr. Steven Emerman, a mining consultant and scientist, told the Halifax Examiner that the ban on uranium mining in Nova Scotia should stay in place, and that among many other things, the high precipitation in the province alone should preclude safe uranium exploration or mining. “I would support keeping that ban,” said Emerman. “I would not recommend uranium mining under any circumstances.” (from Halifax Examiner, March 13th, 2025).
- Why should we have faith in the NS Environmental Assessment (EA) process to protect the environment and human health when it approves virtually all projects submitted and doesn’t prevent industry from breaking laws and polluting the environment? The EAC highlight this in their [fact sheet](#) with the Touquoy open gold pit mine, which, for over 6 years, broke 23 provincial and 3 federal environmental protection laws and is currently in a law suit to avoid the costs of mine remediation to the site. [From the EAC](#): “under the current assessment process, projects have been approved with little scrutiny, enabling corporations to break laws and threaten the safety of the environment. “In recent years we’ve witnessed big industrial projects go through the existing assessment process and get approved with little to no meaningful conditions,” says O’Handley. “Then, project owners break environmental laws with almost no consequences.” [Recent changes](#) in

May 2025 to speed up the EA process could further exacerbate environmental consequences.

- The changes in May 2025 to the Environmental Assessment (EA) process did not incorporate public feedback during consultation in 2023 about changes the public would like to see to the EA process. How can the EA system be the avenue to provide feedback on uranium mining and fracking projects when the government disregards what is communicated to them? “The public wants better transparency in the EA process — specifically regarding the justification for approving projects — and accountability to the input provided in consultations. This is not reflected, or even mentioned, in the changes.” ([EAC statement](#)). It also does not include considerations for cumulative impacts, independent review, diversity, and the Mi’kmaw concept of Netukulimk, which are all important for new energy projects (EAC).

To elaborate on the health risks mentioned above, uranium mining poses health hazards related to radiation exposure from radioactive materials released into air and water and elevated levels of toxic metals. As already noted, historical evidence from uranium mining regions shows dramatically increased rates of lung cancer and other respiratory diseases among miners and nearby residents. While modern safety practices have improved, workers and those living in nearby communities face increased health risks from radon gas, radioactive dust, and potential water contamination. Such hazards extend to non-human animals, as well, many of whom are species at risk in the province.

The long-term environmental impacts of uranium mining is equally concerning. It leaves a toxic legacy of radioactive waste with a half-life of tens of thousands of years. Eighty-five percent of the radioactivity in the uranium ore is left behind as tailings, including many radioactive poisons (such as radium, polonium, and radioactive lead-210) that are far more toxic than uranium itself. These uranium mining and milling wastes will constitute an everlasting health hazard and will have to be monitored and managed in perpetuity at public expense. The Church Rock uranium tailing spill in New Mexico, which released 94 million gallons of such radioactive waste, remains largely unremediated more than 40 years later. A power outage at a uranium mine in Elliot Lake, Ontario, resulted in the spill of two million liters of contaminated water from a tailings site.

Accordingly, I urge you to express to the Premier and relevant Ministers that you/we:

- Do not want uranium exploration or mining in our Hants West district, nor in any part of NS, and
- Would like the ban on uranium mining to be reinstated.

Further, I urge the Province to:

- Meaningfully consult with Mi’kmaw First Nation early in processes that affect unceded Mi’kmaw territory.

Prioritize protection of drinking water sources and ecologically sensitive areas.

- Respect UNDRIP: engage in meaningful consultation with Mi'kmaw communities, and ensure there is free, prior, and informed consent for any activities impacting Mi'kmaw territory.
- Engage in meaningful consultation with rural communities and work collaboratively with them to find shared solutions.
- Respect the UN declaration on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Times are tough, but the health of people and the environment are paramount. Please leave the uranium in the ground, where it is safest.

Karen F. Beazley, PhD

Windsor, NS B0N 2T0

Professor Emerita | [School for Resource and Environmental Studies](#) | [Faculty of Science](#)

Adjunct | [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#)

Pronouns: her/she

Dalhousie University

6299 South Street | PO Box 15000 | Halifax, NS B3H 4R2 Canada

Dalhousie sits on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq nation. We are all Treaty people.

We acknowledge the histories, contributions, and legacies of the African Nova Scotian people and communities who have been here for over 400 years.