

June 4th, 2025

Dear Mayor Zebian, and Councillors of the Municipality of the District of West Hants,

We are writing to ask for the Council's help in protecting the communities of Millet Brook, Vaughan, and the Avon River watershed from uranium exploration. We are asking that while Council and the community educate themselves about the potential impacts of uranium exploration in our area, Council adopt two motions that could help protect the community and the Avon River watershed before any harm is done.

Motion 1: WHRM Council formally requests that the provincial government pause before granting any leases for uranium exploration in our County, to allow time for Council and communities to become informed and give input about the potential impacts of uranium exploration on the community, and allow sufficient time for the Province to conduct meaningful consultations with the public and First Nations, and weigh potential risks as well as benefits.

Motion 2: WHRM Council affirms the importance of safe drinking water for all county residents, both those living in centralized areas serviced by our municipal water systems and those living outside those areas who rely on wells. Council states our intention to investigate how the County might improve the protection of water supplies of residents relying on wells and our municipal water supply. As we undertake this process, we formally request that the province pause before granting any uranium exploration licenses.

We need to better understand how residents in both areas will be affected by uranium exploration in the 2300-hectare site proposed by the provincial government for uranium exploration, and the approximately 6400 hectares of mineral exploration claims surrounding this site.

The site is a 2300-hectare area located in the Avon River watershed in Millet Brook, Vaughan, Hants County. It is less than 8km from Windsor's designated water supply area and less than 5km from Falmouth's designated water supply area. The province has opened a Request for Proposal for these areas, which will close on June 11, and has stated that they plan to award leases at the end of June 2025. Exploration activities could begin after that date. Exploration for uranium is unlike exploration for other minerals. Uranium becomes hazardous when it is disturbed. Disturbed uranium is highly mobile and soluble. This means that once uranium is disturbed, it dissolves easily in water and can be carried long distances in water and in air.

Environment Canada stated in a brief presented to the McCleave Commission in 1985,

*"The release of radioactive matter into the environment presents a **special class of environmental protection problems** because radiation cannot, in any known practical way, be neutralized or altered from its natural decay sequence, and it can cause **permanent cumulative or delayed but irreversible harmful effects** in all living organisms. Therefore, radioactive materials would require containment during their hazardous lifetime to allay health and environmental concerns." (McCleave Final Report, January 30 1985 (p 142) (Emphasis added)*

The brief also stated,

“In Nova Scotia, the wet climate, high water table and generally acidic waters may pose special problems for radioactive waste management.”

A statement from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (March 2025) notes,

“Uranium mining and exploration ... pose grave risks. They release radon and radioactive toxic particles that can contaminate soil, water, crops, and wildlife. These contaminants can enter the food chain and jeopardize our drinking water supplies. Nova Scotia is the second most densely populated province in Canada. No matter where you live in the province, your health could be at risk.”

The attached map shows that the proposed uranium lease area is in the Avon River watershed, which could also affect our protected water supplies. It is in an area with many surface water sources, such as lakes, streams, and ponds, and can have potential implications on our water supply in Windsor and Falmouth. It is in a populated area, with full-time residents and cottage owners. Water flow from the proposed lease area would flow through hundreds of properties before reaching the Avon River and the Minas Basin. Exploration for uranium was already done in Millet Brook beginning in the summer of 1976 with radiometric and stream sediment surveys. This was followed by trenching and at least 26 Diamond Drill Holes. We understand from a source familiar with mining exploration practices that the next stage of exploration to further evaluate the resource by duplicating this drilling could involve significant disturbance of uranium. The provincial government is moving fast to open the province to uranium exploration. Although the ban on uranium exploration was arrived at through broad public consultation and thorough scientific evidence, the Provincial government is proceeding without evaluation of general or site-specific risks and without consultation with communities, the public, or First Nations. It appears that this government has not evaluated potential risks to drinking water, fisheries, farmland, property values, or public health. There is still a lot for people to learn about the potential impacts of uranium exploration in our area. There is also a lot to learn about how to protect our watershed and municipal water supply. We believe it is more than reasonable to ask the government to pause before granting any leases for uranium exploration in Hants County, and for the Council to take steps to protect the Avon River watershed before harm is done that cannot be reversed. Thank you for considering our request. We hope the Council will adopt these motions as a first step in dealing with this issue.

Sarah Trask Duggan and Chad Pothier, with our community, Concerned Citizens from Vaughan, NS