



Open Letter to the Hon Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia concerning
Uranium Exploration and Mining in Nova Scotia.

July 2, 2025

Office of the Premier
P.O. Box 726
Halifax, NS
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Dear Premier Houston.

We are writing to express our concern about the government's recent efforts to promote uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia. We believe the health, environmental, and social risks of this type of fast-tracked resource development outweigh any potential benefit. Especially without due consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, affected communities, and the general public, uranium development risks exacerbating environmental and social injustices in our province. The Faculty Council of the Environment and Sustainability Studies (ESST) Program at Acadia University unreservedly calls on the government to reinstate the Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act repealed by Bill 6 in March.

In writing this letter, we are adding our voices to a chorus that has already expressed concern about Bill 6 and the prospect of uranium development and hydraulic fracturing in Nova Scotia. Of note, on February 26, you received a letter from the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs highlighting your failure to consult with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, the threat Bill 6 poses to the Mi'kmaq's Constitutionally protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and their record of opposing uranium development and hydraulic fracturing in the past. A statement from June 13 notes the province's continued failure to engage with the Mi'kmaq on the issue of uranium exploration. On February 19 and June 11, the Nova Scotia chapter of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) published open letters to you that clearly and explicitly outlined the health risks to Nova Scotians of resuming uranium exploration and mining in the province and calling on the government to reinstate the Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act repealed by Bill 6. Affected communities have also expressed concern about uranium exploration and mining at well-attended community meetings being held across the province.

Your government was re-elected in November, 2024 to the Nova Scotia legislature with a supermajority. This enhanced political power comes with the added responsibility to exercise prudence and restraint to avoid the temptation to dismiss dissenting opinion or contrary evidence. Neither uranium nor hydraulic fracturing development were included in the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia's election platform. Despite this lack of transparency and the well-documented evidence about the dangers of uranium mining in Nova Scotia, you have clearly indicated your intention to plough ahead with your goal to open Nova Scotia to critical minerals and other resource development. As you have clarified to the media, you are undeterred that your call for bids for interest in uranium mining went unanswered.

In their letter, CAPE not only documents the substantial health risks associated with the uranium mining industry, it also draws your attention to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Uranium (Nova Scotia, January 1985). Judge McCleave, the sole commissioner who headed this inquiry, toured Nova Scotia and patiently listened to the testimony of numerous individuals and groups in forty-four public hearings. While there was clear support from industry interests, there was widespread opposition from the public, some merely stating their concern while others provided in-depth scientific evidence on the health and environmental risks to human health and wildlife, and to the economic risks to Nova Scotia's established industries, particularly those in rural Nova Scotia including agriculture and tourism. The recurring message to Judge McCleave was that while uranium mining may have short-term economic benefits that largely accrue to industry interests, there are immeasurable long-term environmental and health costs to our established economies and to the Nova Scotia public. You seem to have been persuaded that any concerns that were raised in the McLeave inquiry have now been addressed, but this is not borne out by the evidence. The fundamental risks have not changed.

The most vexing and seemingly unsurmountable issue is the long-term management of the uranium mining tailing settling ponds where the tailings contain approximately 85% of the radioactivity present in the original ore, "about 5% of the uranium originally present and more than 99% of the radium-226 and thorium-230" (NS Dept of Environment in McLeave, 1985 pp 317-325). The report of the Department of Environment goes on to state that "by present standards the level of [radio]activity after 100,000 years would be too high not to require isolation". The question that must be answered today is whether the engineering, construction and management of tailing settling ponds and subsequent containment has indeed reached a level of reasonable risk for present and future generations.



Critically, given the longevity of radioactivity of the tailings, now in the consistency of a slurry of fine sand submerged in contaminated water, there is no credible evidence that available engineering can safely contain these tailings over the short, medium, and long terms. Of great concern is how many future generations must we consider in any full cost accounting of tailings maintenance costs. It is financially unaffordable for the present generation beneficiaries of nuclear energy to bear the full costs of future tailings maintenance, and unfair to simply pass on the enduring health and environmental costs to a succession of future generations.

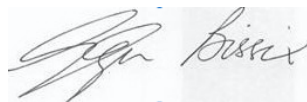
Moreover, we know that the risks of uranium mining and other extractive industries are not evenly experienced. It is well documented that Indigenous peoples and communities of colour face disproportionate exposure to toxic land uses, like uranium exploration and mining. Workers, who face elevated exposure at work, pay for their jobs with their health. And, as CAPE notes, children, women, and pregnant people are disproportionately harmed by exposure to radiation. But, regardless of the specific risks, Mi'kma'ki is unceded territory and the province has a constitutional duty to consult with the original peoples of this land. The types of development that Bill 6 aims to fast-track should not be considered without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Mi'kmaq.

As members of the ESST faculty council at Acadia University, we, like you, are committed to improving the long-term sustainability and well-being of our province. This type of rushed resource development is not a sustainable or effective development strategy for the economy, environment, or people of Nova Scotia. We therefore urge you to abandon your present path, which is not only detrimental to our health and economy, but also to both our current and future generations.

Signed By:



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Glyn Bissix, Environment & Sustainability Studies and Community Development

Signed on behalf of (please see next page):



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