

# Premier Tim Houston says no one wants to talk about uranium, but people in West Hants have plenty to say



BY JOAN BAXTER  
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*Stop uranium signs abound in Hants County, like this one in front of an auto dealership in Windsor. This photo was taken on Oct. 20, 2025. Credit: Joan Baxter*

It's Oct. 20, 2025, a cool grey fall afternoon, and eight people ranging in age from four to 80 have converged on a hilly area about 12 kilometres southwest of Windsor, in Hants County.

They've come to have a closer look at the area Premier Tim Houston's Progressive Conservative government has been promoting for uranium exploration and mining.

Local people know the area as Levy Meadow Brook, very popular for hunting and recreation, with numerous lakes and streams. The provincial government and those who would mine uranium here call it "Millet Brook."



*The 2,300-hectare Millet Brook area the provincial government is promoting for uranium exploration and mining is to the west of Highway 14, including Five Island Lake (marked in red), and the area around that where wind turbine development is visible. This screenshot from Google Maps is from Oct. 24, 2025. Credit: [Google Map data @2025](#).*

For Gillian Thomas, the oldest member of the group, today's visit to the area is a trip down a lane of unpleasant memories of fighting the mining lobby and provincial governments that cater to it.

"I certainly never hoped to come back here again," says Thomas. "Though it was a pleasant enough area." That, she points out, is because there has never been any uranium mining here.





*On Oct. 20, 2025, Gillian Thomas visited the Millet Brook area in Hants County for the third time in her life. She was here in the 1980s when the area was slated for uranium mining, which Thomas opposed. And she visited it again in the early 2000s, when once again the provincial government was looking to lift a moratorium on uranium development. Credit: Joan Baxter*

Although it's clear much of the area has been heavily logged in recent years, it is still wild and rugged, with massive outcrops of granite surrounded by plucky young trees and hardy shrubs. Two new wind turbines, part of Natural Forces' Benjamin Mills project, stand tall atop higher terrain in the distance.





*The Benjamin Mills Phase 1 wind project, owned by Natural Forces, is under construction in the Millet Brook area, where the province has been promoting uranium exploration and mining. Credit: Joan Baxter*

Thomas says she's walked the area twice before. Once was in the early 1980s, when she was part of a group called Citizen Action to Protect the Environment (CAPE), which formed to fight against proposed uranium mining in Millet Brook. Widespread opposition to the project led the government of Progressive Conservative premier John Buchanan to declare a moratorium on uranium exploration and mining in 1981. Buchanan then set up the [Commission of Inquiry on Uranium](#) under Judge Robert McCleave, who eventually and reluctantly concluded the moratorium should remain in place.

Thomas recalls the immense sacrifices that members of CAPE and countless other Nova Scotians made researching the issue, and then making their case to politicians, and to the [McCleave Commission of Inquiry](#).

For [Thomas and her partner](#), writer Donna Smyth (both of whom are retired university professors), that struggle also involved a long, expensive, and stressful court case, as the Examiner reported [here](#).



## **Mining lobby never stops lobbying**

The second time Thomas visited Millet Brook was in the early 2000s, when she accompanied two geologists from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). At the time, the mining lobby was pressuring the Progressive Conservative government to lift the moratorium, and once again, citizens mobilized to fight it.

Their efforts were not in vain.

In 2009, the NDP government of Darrell Dexter turned the moratorium into law with the [Act to Prohibit Uranium Exploration and Uranium Mining in Nova Scotia](#). After that, the Liberal government of Stephen McNeil [held out against](#) persistent pushing from the Mining Association of Nova Scotia (MANS) to have the ban lifted.

Then along came Houston. At the very beginning of his second term as premier, Houston described the ban as “lazy” policy, and the legislated moratorium on uranium exploration and mining bit the radioactive dust.

When Thomas heard the news, she had two reactions. “One was ‘Oh no, not again!’ And the other was ‘Why?’”

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[Related: Premier Tim Houston has a hate on for ‘special interest groups’ but won’t say who they are. Here are the actual special interests in Nova Scotia.](#)

Now, more than four decades later, Thomas finds herself once again embroiled in the uranium issue, and revisiting the Millet Brook area, this time in the company of younger generations of local people who share her concerns.

## **Signs of opposition to uranium mining**

Long before we even get to the Millet Brook site, it is obvious that there is a lot of opposition in Hants County to uranium exploration and mining.

The signs are everywhere — on roadsides, in front of homes and local businesses, and even on a beautiful wooded island in Mockingee Lake, just across from [Falls Lake Provincial Park](#), which borders the area where the provincial government wants to see uranium mining.



"No to uranium mining" signs seen July 12, 2025 along Highway 14 in West Hants. Credit: Yvette d'Entremont



A "stop uranium mining sign" seen outside a gas station/convenience store on July 12, 2025 along Highway 14 in West Hants. Credit: Yvette d'Entremont



Linda and Glen Cameron of Windsor Forks live just a very few kilometres from the Millet Brook site being proposed for uranium exploration and mining. This photo was taken on Oct. 24, 2025. Credit: Sarah Trask-Duggan



Anti-uranium sign on the Mockingee Lake, just across from Falls Lake Provincial Park in Hants County. This photo was taken on Oct. 24, 2025. Credit: Sarah Trask-Duggan

Guiding today's outing in Millet Brook is Reuben Hebb, from the nearby community of Leminster.

Retired geologist and [Halifax Examiner contributor](#), Dr. Elisabeth Kusters, has also joined the group, as have Brad Redden and Sarah Trask-Duggan of the citizens' group Safe and Responsible Resource Development (SARRD), which has sprung up to oppose uranium mining in the area.





*On Oct. 20, 2025 Brad Redden (L) and Dr. Elisabeth Kusters (R) study granite outcropping and other geological features of the Millet Brook area in Hants County, where the provincial government of Premier Tim Houston is promoting uranium development. Credit: Joan Baxter*

Three small children in the group gleefully clamber about on granite outcroppings, and on a concrete platform left behind by the mining companies that in the late 1970s and early 1980s wanted to mine uranium here.

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### **Houston government solicits uranium exploration**

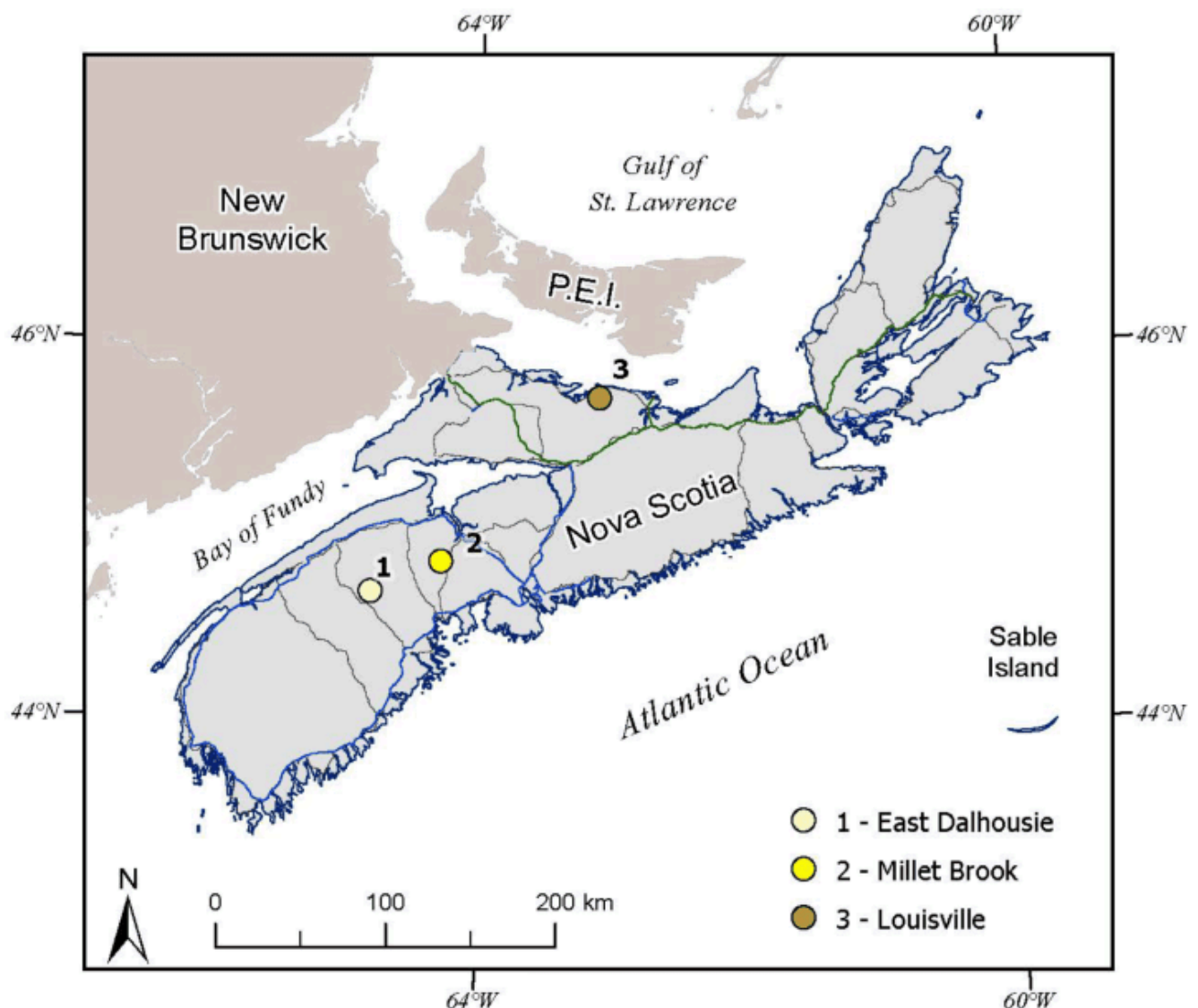
Millet Brook is one of three areas Houston's government promoted for uranium exploration earlier this year, after his government passed omnibus Bill 6, an "[Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources](#)," in March 2025. That act repealed the 2009 law prohibiting uranium mining and exploration in Nova Scotia.

Less than two months later, DNR [issued Requests for Proposals \(RFPs\)](#) for uranium exploration in three rural areas of Nova Scotia: [East Dalhousie](#) in Kings and Annapolis Counties (64 hectares in the LaHave River watershed), [Louisville](#) near River John in Pictou County (80 hectares), and a vast area around [Millet Brook](#) in Hants County (2,300 hectares).

[Related: Premier Houston's government is promoting uranium exploration and mining, and the frenzy of laying claim to Nova Scotia has begun](#)

[Related: 'Premier Houston, we are asking you to pause before granting any licences for uranium': Concerned residents gather in River John](#)

In the end, the province received [no bids](#) for uranium exploration in the three areas.



Map showing the locations of the areas where the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources issued requests for proposals for uranium exploration, in May 2025. Credit: [NS Department of Natural Resources](#)



## **‘Something people don’t want to talk about’**

On Thursday last week, Houston signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Ontario’s energy minister, pledging cooperation on the development of small modular nuclear reactors in that province, to which Ottawa and the Ontario government have already committed a whopping \$3 billion.



*Premier Tim Houston and Stephen Lecce, Ontario’s Minister of Energy and Mines, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Small Modular Reactors in Halifax on Oct. 23, 2025. Credit: Province of Nova Scotia*

After the signing, CBC reporter Taryn Grant asked Houston if Nova Scotia’s uranium figured into the MOU signing. He replied:

It doesn’t at this time. But it’s a resource that is in demand in the world. We don’t have any active projects for uranium and I don’t want to set off any hysteria today or any crazy headlines but it’s a resource that we have. There are no applications for active projects...but in the fullness of time as nuclear power becomes more in demand maybe that resource will be in demand as well.

“We’re interested in nuclear,” said Houston. “We also have a lot of uranium in this province but I know that’s something people don’t want to talk about.”

The lack of takers for the province’s request for uranium exploration proposals doesn’t mean local people have let down their guard.

Nor does it seem Houston is right when he says people don't want to talk about uranium development.

That's exactly what some are very anxious to talk about, and they've been doing a lot of it in recent months.

### **Petitioning the government**

On Oct. 3, people concerned about the potential health and environmental effects of uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia presented a petition with 7,000 signatures to the provincial legislature.

The signatories asked Houston to halt the current request for proposals open for uranium exploration and extraction in Nova Scotia, reinstate the moratorium on uranium exploration and extraction, and bring in a permanent legislative ban on uranium exploration and extraction without delay.

One of the driving forces behind the petition was Sarah Trask-Duggan, originally from Yarmouth, who moved with her family from New Minas to Falls Lake three years ago.

"My daughter had an autoimmune disease when she was four," Trask-Duggan tells me during the outing to Millet Brook. "We wanted a well...She's severely allergic to chlorine, so we had to leave New Minas. We took everything we had and built our dream house on Falls Lake."

Then in May 2025, Trask-Duggan heard there was going to be a meeting "of utmost importance" in East Dalhousie. She and her husband attended, and learned that the provincial government was promoting a huge area close to their home on Falls Lake for uranium exploration and mining.

"It was terrifying," Trask-Duggan recalls. She went into "pure shock," got sick, and "cried for two days." Then the shock galvanized her into action. Her community organized a meeting in the Vaughan firehall, where she met Thomas and others who had been involved in the struggle decades ago for a permanent ban on uranium exploration and mining in the province.





*Sarah Trask-Duggan in the Millet Brook area in Hants County, which is very close to her home on Falls Lake. The Millet Brook area is slated for uranium exploration. This photo was taken on Oct. 20, 2025. Credit: Joan Baxter*

“I realized how this would impact our whole province. I kind of went from a me mindset, to a ‘this-is-all-of-Nova Scotia’ mindset, and that’s when you kind of spring into action,” says Trask-Duggan. “This is all of our homes, this is our forests, our lakes, our fish, our animals.”

Trask-Duggan dove into activism, working with others alarmed by the possibility of uranium development. “There were hundreds of people in this community in Windsor and Wolfville and all the surrounding areas who’ve sold signs and delivered signs,” she says.





*Concerned citizens in Hants County have been making, distributing, and posting signs all over the province. This photo was taken on Oct. 20, 2025. Credit: Joan Baxter*

They also collected signatures on the petition that Lisa Lachance of the opposition NDP and interim Liberal Leader Derek Mombourquette presented to the legislature.

### **‘Like a bunch of football jocks’**

Trask-Duggan says she was disappointed by the behaviour of the Progressive Conservatives in the House of Assembly the day their petition was tabled. “I found it to be like a bunch of football jocks. It felt so childlike, very immature. [NDP and opposition Leader] Claudia Chender would be speaking, and you could hear them chuckling, and she would say to them, ‘This isn’t a laughing matter.’”

Trask-Duggan explains:

When we looked down from the visitors’ gallery, we could see the Conservatives were on their phones and not paying attention, and it made me kind of sick, to be honest. And then when I heard that was the last day [of the legislature’s fall session], I was gutted because there’s just so much work to do, and we’ve waited and waited and waited for things to get done, and nothing got done. So our excitement was just sort of smashed that night.



“I think what we’re seeing from this government is a total lack of respect for the people, the citizens, the environment, Indigenous groups, everyone,” Trask-Duggan tells me, as we stand in the fading daylight in Millet Brook. “They’re just disrespectful.”

Trask-Duggan says her MLA, Progressive Conservative Melissa Sheehy-Richard, has had “nothing” to say to the concerned citizens, and has never attended one of their meetings.

I emailed Sheehy-Richard with questions about her response to the concerned citizens and her stand on uranium mining, but have had no reply.

### **‘It’s an amazing place’**

Reuben Hebb stands on the narrow gravel track called Pioneer Drive and points south towards Five Island Lake. He notes that the lake is also within the 5,700-acre Millet Brook area the Houston government promoted for uranium extraction.

“People have hunted there for years and years and years,” he says. “There are numerous camps around here. It’s an amazing place.”



*Reuben Hebb’s family’s roots go back six generations in the Millet Brook area in Hants County. They also own land around the area the province is promoting for uranium exploration and development. This photo was taken on Oct. 20, 2025.*



“We live on a farm, and I raise all my own meat and and vegetables, and I make sure they [his four-year-old twin girls] don’t eat the crap that’s out there today,” says Hebb. “We come back here a lot. This is our stomping ground back here.” Hebb says he’s sixth generation on this land; his great-great-grandfather came to the area from Germany.

Any mining here would be “disastrous for the environment,” Hebb says. “Five Island Lake Brook runs out of Five Island Lake, which feeds into Falls Lake, which feeds into the Avon River, which feeds into the Minas Basin. Five Island Lake also feeds into Levy Meadow Brook, which runs further up the area where they want to mine.”

“We’re on top of a mountain here,” Hebb says. “How would you ever contain tailings ponds? You never would.”



*Although the province calls the area it is promoting for uranium Millet Brook, local people say the brook that runs through the area is called the Levy Meadow Brook. Their concern is that all these brooks feed eventually into the Avon River, and thus the Minas Basin, so no mining should take place in the watershed. Credit: Joan Baxter*



## **‘Nobody wants this’**

Hebb believes there would be blockades if anyone came into the area to mine uranium, and adds that his family would not agree to granting access through their land. He says his father Buddy Hebb already received a phone call from local MLA Melissa Sheehy-Richard, trying to convince him that uranium exploitation was the right thing for Nova Scotia, and asking for access through his land for exploration.

That, Hebb says, is not going to happen.

He fears that if the province pushes too hard, and miners actually show up, there could be “a lot of dozers on fire.”

Trask-Duggan agrees that if the province goes ahead with the uranium development, and mining companies show up to explore in the area, it will not go well.

“I think there would be bulldozers, I think they would get equipment, they have heavy tractors, and they would block the roads,” she says. “They would not let people in here. Nobody wants this. I know most of these people would go to jail, they’ve said that.”

Trask-Duggan continues:

When I voted for Tim Houston, he did not mention uranium at all. If I had known he would lift the ban on uranium exploration and mining, he never would have received my vote, and this sentiment has been echoed throughout my circles of friends and neighbours.

We are very confident that if there was a full, science-based evaluation of the risks and benefits of uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia conditions, it would never be allowed. There is nothing hysterical about pointing out that the conditions in Nova Scotia make uranium exploration and mining a very high risk to clean water and to health.

“A responsible leader would look at the facts before trying to attract companies to explore for uranium,” Trask-Duggan concludes. “The issue should not be whether there is interest from industry. The issue to look at first and foremost is whether allowing uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia is safe or responsible. And it is not.”

Hebb has this message for Houston’s government:

Let’s just reinstate the ban, get over this uranium bullshit, and think of other ways to make some money for our province, if that’s what your goal is. We voted you in, we can vote you out.