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Province plans to ban uranium mining

Natural Resources minister says law is what public wanted, but he couldn't really say whyBy JEFFREY SIMPSON Provincial Reporter
Thu. Oct 15 - 4:46 AM

The NDP government announced Wednesday that it will make it illegal to mine uranium in the province — but had trouble explaining why.

Natural Resources Minister John MacDonell said turning a long-standing ban into law was a response to public concerns. He said he heard some of those concerns while he was chairman of the legislature's resources committee, although he couldn't recall the details.

"That was over a year ago, so if I was to speak kind of clearly on all of that, I might mislead you and I'd mislead myself," Mr. MacDonell told reporters at a briefing on the bill.

"So I won't go there."

Mr. MacDonell said the province is giving up a potential source of revenue while it grapples with its \$592-million deficit.

"This is one of those places where I think Nova Scotians have said, 'Gain revenue where you can, but we're not interested in you getting it here,'" he said.

The proposed law prohibits mining and exploring for uranium. It goes beyond a cabinet-decreed ban dating from 1981 by making it more difficult for future governments to change this policy. To do so, they would need a majority of members to vote for it.

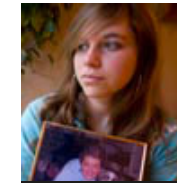
But it allows for the metal to be mined if it's encountered when digging for another mineral, if it is present in quantities of less than .01 per cent by weight.

Mr. MacDonell said the proposed law will remove any incentive companies may have to search for uranium.

"Even in the event of a discovery, the explorer can obtain no rights to the commodity and therefore has no opportunity to benefit from the discovery," he said.

The proposed law is modelled after those in New South Wales and Victoria in Australia.

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"Many Nova Scotians have expressed their opposition to uranium and a desire to see the moratorium strengthened by legislating it," Mr. MacDonell said.

"We promised to make this moratorium law and we are keeping that promise."

Peter Oram, president of the Mining Association of Nova Scotia, said people in the industry are disappointed.

"We feel there really needs to be more fact-based, science-based discussion on policy," Mr. Oram said. "This feels a little more like politics than policy."

Liberal MLA Leo Glavine said he supported the moratorium but was left with unanswered questions about the proposed law.

"I was hoping today that the minister himself would have come with a more depth of knowledge on the subject. I was surprised that he hadn't even conferred with his cabinet colleagues on this. So it's very much in tune with a political promise, as opposed to a well-researched document."

Tory MLA Chuck Porter recently introduced a private member's bill in the legislature to ban mining for uranium in his riding of Hants West to protect the area's watershed.

Mr. Porter said he supports the proposed law but is open to reconsidering it if mining uranium is eventually deemed to be without risk.

"It may very well come to fruition someday," he said.

"We'll get the people's opinion."

(jsimpson@herald.ca)



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cabottrail wrote:

This is a bad sign of things to come for Nova Scotia when you look at the decision-making process here. It seems the decision was made based on "what people said" far more than based on a sound financial and economic business case. There is no need to ignore a source of revenue that by default would mean residents would have to pay less in income taxes and property taxes. If the same logic is applied over at Tourism, then watch Paris walk away from the revenue being lost because of all the people, many from out of province, who rent out their summer homes and stick all the money in their jeans and head for their USA home. What's that worth, another \$500,000 a year? Ahh, we can afford it. Ahh, but then again are any businesses closing because of this? Ahh, no one has checked that but we know our tourism sales are way down, wonder if there's a connection? Naw, we couldn't have people renting 500 waterside properties and no one paying the taxes could we??

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chuckles wrote:

No Real Unions in the mining sector around here to worry about right Premier Dexter.

chuckles wrote:

That was over a year ago, so if I was to speak kind of clearly on all of that, I might mislead you and I'd mislead myself," Mr. MacDonell told reporters at a briefing on the bill. Nothing new with this Minister who constantly rants about something but when he's finished even he has a puzzled look on his face as all others listening to him. This guy after spending all the time he has put in SHOULD be better at his JOB. However with a Majority government they just don't give a hoot.

Babblingbaby wrote:

MacDonnel and Porter, oh nimby.

PF wrote:

I'm sure Enron and many Saudi Princes are rejoicing, environmentalists have struck another blow for our reliance on fossil fuels.

bc clearcutter wrote:

NDP starts their war against mining and business

annmarie wrote:

Good news.

radioman wrote:

It's what the majority of Nova Scotian's want?? I don't ever remember being asked my opinion and I live in Hants County where significant deposits are located.I suspect it is a case of "the majority of the people that we know are against mining". This province is headed to hell in a hand basket and is picking up speed. A few years down the road we will be crying for the income that uranium mining would bring. Mining companies will not want to come here even for other minerals due to our restrictions. Chuckie-Boy Porter should go back to training paramedics and leave politics alone as he is not thinking of his constituents on this one. Uranium mining can and has been done safely in other areas and those areas have reaped great benefits. Here in Nova Scotia we run and ask for government approvals on everything and ask for bans on everything else to protect us from ourselves. Yes sir fellows, the slippery slope just got steeper.

Tank wrote:

I agree, no Uranium mining here, we don't need it and don't want it.

keeptheyounginNS wrote:

In 1994, after several years of research by experienced and educated people, the Department of Natural Resources produced report ME1994-6: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/meb/pdf/94ofr06.asp> This report is titled "The Activities, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Interdepartmental Uranium Committee Concerning the Uranium Mining and Exploration Industries". Recommendation 8-1 states that "The Committee recommends the moratorium in uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia to be lifted". The Committee also recommended "separate uranium inquiries of each uranium development". To me, those who know about mining techniques, environmental consequences, society and hard facts regarding uranium handling have spoken on the 1994 report, yet the government has completely and utterly ignored their advice. This is not democracy, this is partisan politics or favours to be paid to someone, not a decision based on information available. Dear NDP, here is a suggestion: why don't you run a public vote across the province regarding uranium mining? Only then will you be able to say you are responding to nova scotians concerns, and not simply to your political minions.

ScotianInAB wrote:

Good news! I don't want any mining company staking a claim to my land and telling me there is nothing I can do about it.

libbysue wrote:

Let Nova Scotians have the opportunity to get informed before you make desicions for them. Hey who cares what experts say, your politicians.

another voice wrote:

Our ridiculous taxes are driving the young out. We have resources to sell, giving us a much needed reduction in taxes. Of course we will probably lease the land to foreign companies for a dollar to employ a handful of Nova Scotians as we did with the oil and lumber. Mine it, sell it, and reduce property taxes. That would be the wisest stimulas plan.

Julius wrote:

"The NDP government announced Wednesday that it will make it illegal to mine uranium in the province but had trouble explaining why". Is this for real? We are emerging as the stand alone laughing stock of the country. Why do the least educated on the topic have the biggest influence? Why are we in Nova Scotia so much more enlightened then the PROVEN most environmentally friendly countries in the world; Denmark, Sweden, Finland etc, whom rely on Nuclear for base power consumption? The NDP and other mentioned bureaucrats have proven that knowledge is a tool they choose to ignore in favour of blind ignorance. "Mr. Porter said he supports the proposed law but is open to reconsidering it if mining uranium is eventually deemed to be without risk". You better stay in bed Mr. Porter, because I hate to be the one to break this to you, BUT EVERYTHING HAS RISK! Like Keeptheyoung mentioned, the government has spent years weighing the risks (and rewards) and concludes that uranium mining is safe.Please do some research occasionally.I would be embarrassed to be this minsiter Watch as our talented and motivated leave in mass exodus for 'greener pastures'. It disgusts me

bro tim wrote:

Fear mongering at its worst.

Imfao wrote:

How much money was spent in 2007 on minerals exploration in Nova Scotia? \$10mil. Newfoundland? \$160mil. Newfoundland doesn't have a moratorium on uranium mining, and as a result you can go digging around for minerals and if you find what you're looking for, you can dig it out. Here, if you go looking for something, and happen to find uranium with it, you're out of luck. It greatly increases your exploration risk, and continues to prohibit development of a mining industry in this province. A quick check of the DNR website shows 29 identified areas of uranium mineralization in the province, often coincident with gold and copper. Why shouldn't a company be allowed to develop a commercial operation which can provide much needed employment and tax-revenue to the province? Absolutely ludicrous. The title of DNR's mining conference in November? "Mining Matters." Ironic.

Heatherdee wrote:

Oh great, Porter's interested in protecting watersheds now is he? Super. Hope he meets with all west hants communities to talk about how else we can do just that.

Geo27 wrote:

I think this is ridiculous! I am originally from Nova Scotia, but I have been living out west for the past few years working as a geologist in the uranium industry. The people who are against uranium mining, obviously don't know how strict the Canadian regulations on uranium mining are, and are completely ignorant to the processes and procedures of uranium exploration and mining. The province obviously needs more money and jobs, and the uranium industry could provide this, but there are those people out there that are afraid of change and things they don't understand. I like many Nova Scotians am very much concerned with the environment and human safety and I would never work in a job that I felt threatened either of these, so people have to understand that uranium mining companies are not these big bad companies that come to destroy everything in their path, they have strict policies to protect both human health and the environment like any other type of mine.

Gord Arthur wrote:

Isn't this just lovely, it's clear from MacDonnells interview that he not only can't defend implementing this law, has no idea why they are imposing it except to appease a bunch of no-development, nimby types. I wonder what survey or data they used to determine that "Nova Scotians don't want it". Even if this is true, and I strongly doubt it, since when do governments just do what the public wants. Hell, I bet if you polled everyone and asked if they'd like lower taxes you can bet your bottom dollar the answer would be a resounding yes. However, somehow, I don't think our elected yes men would lower taxes though. Whatever happened to using science and facts to make decisions? Australias Ranger uranium inquiry, British Columbia's Bates uranium inquiry of 1980, our provinces McCleave uranium inquiry of 1985 and our own interdepartmental uranium committee in 1994 all concluded that uranium mining done properly can be done safely and acceptably. Unfortunately, in our leftist Nova Scotia society, squeaky wheels do get grease.

Feedback wrote:
Foolish decision.

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