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Uranium ban hurts business: N.S. mining group

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CBC News

The president of the Mining Association of Nova Scotia says the province risks losing business if it bans uranium mining.

Peter Oram said other provinces in the region that have mineral incentive programs, such as Newfoundland and New Brunswick, will reap the benefits.

"They do not have the same restrictions," he said Thursday. "For people elsewhere, it's probably one more reason not to choose Nova Scotia, unfortunately."

There has been a moratorium on the exploration and mining of uranium in the province since 1981, but only in the form of a cabinet policy statement.

On Wednesday, the NDP government announced the ban would become law, which would

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make it difficult for future governments to rescind or change it.

"I didn't have any in-depth conversations with my cabinet colleagues," said Natural Resources Minister John MacDonell. "The direction I got was that this was a promise that we made in opposition and it's one that we can fulfil and intended to fulfil."

Oram said members of the industry were disappointed and he does not believe the ban on the radioactive mineral would make the people of Nova Scotia any safer.

Data collection benefits

"By banning exploration and mining, what you're doing is banning data collection," he said. "We think that there's more benefit to having information collected, information compiled, sharing that with all different levels of government."

The law would allow mining operations that encounter uranium while looking for another mineral to continue, as long as the uranium amounts to less than 100 parts per million.

Opponents of uranium mining have argued that uranium tailings, or mine waste, are difficult to dispose of and Nova Scotia is too densely populated to safely exploit the mineral.

The Mining Association said the law will prevent millions of dollars' worth of exploration for other minerals.

"Does this apply to people that draw water wells? Does this apply to people that do quarry development? Does this apply to Department of Transportation and Infrastructure if they're building a road and they happen to expose materials?" Oram said.

"We feel like there's not enough information on this. It raises a lot of questions about who does the monitoring and how is the information going to be compiled," he said.

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