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## Uranium legislation introduced

by [Adam Jacobs](#)

COUNTY - The NDP government has come through on its promise for a legislative ban on uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia.

The legislation was introduced on the floor of the legislature on October 14, almost 30 years after a non-legislative ban was put in place in 1981.

"We will legislate this moratorium because it is what Nova Scotians want," said Natural Resources Minister John MacDonell. "This measure responds to the concerns that Nova Scotians have expressed over the mining of uranium in our province."

The NDP campaigned in part on a promise to legislate a ban, which until the legislation is passed, can be removed with the stroke of a pen.

Chester-St. Margarets MLA Denise Peterson-Rafuse said because the government is currently sitting through budget estimates, she has yet to speak with anyone in her riding about the legislation.

"I can't wait to hear their reactions," she said. "They [the NDP party] were fighting for that legislation long before I was here. They have been working toward this for probably six years. I can't take full credit for this."

The new legislation prohibits exploration for, or mining of, uranium in Nova Scotia.

However, it does allow for incidental mining of uranium that is encountered in the course of mining other minerals as long as the uranium is present in quantities less than 0.01 per cent by weight.

The proposed law is modeled after existing laws in New South Wales and Victoria in Australia.

Uranium mining was banned in Nova Scotia in 1981 after a group led by Friends of Nature founder and Chester resident Rudy Haase petitioned the government of the day.

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Local groups, such as Friends of Nature and the Council of Canadians, South Shore Chapter, have been pushing for a legislative ban ever since former premier Rodney MacDonald said his government would explore the viability of nuclear energy as a source of alternative power earlier this year. Uranium is a key component to making nuclear energy.



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Before the legislation can become law, the opposition parties must first be given a chance to review and debate it on the floor of the legislature.

blog index That, said Ms Peterson-Rafuse, is just a formality in this case.

"Because we are the majority, we know it will pass."

Even though the NDP is a majority, Ms Peterson-Rafuse said the government wanted to take its time with the legislation to get it right the first time, rather than rush and make mistakes.

"This has taken months," she said. "There are 10 sides to every story and you have to do your homework first. We started discussions in the early days. There's a process for all the checks and balances. The Department of Natural Resources staff has to put forth the memoranda and then it has to go to the legislative committee and then the caucus and the legislature itself."

The government, she added, is ready for the inevitable backlash from the mining industry, which, she said, hasn't been left out of the process.

"There's been a lot of public consultation," she added. "It won't effect the current exploration companies because they're not mining for uranium anyway."

The bottom line is the government has taken a stand, said the minister.

"This legislation sends a clear message to the mineral industry and all Nova Scotians regarding government's long-term intentions with respect to uranium," said Mr. MacDonell.

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