

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, NS B3J 1X5
premier@novascotia.ca

RE: Repealing the Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act and Amendments to
Permit Hydraulic Fracturing of Natural Gas in Nova Scotia

Dear Premier Houston,

We are writing on behalf of the Eco-Justice Working Group within the Justice Mission and Outreach Committee of the United Church of Canada, Regions East. We wish to express our deep concerns regarding your plans to remove bans on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for natural gas and uranium mining exploration. We feel it is our duty as Christians caring for Creation, in this time of climate crisis, to bring to your attention the harmful effects of these extractive industries.

In 2012, the 87th Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada “urged the four provincial governments within its bounds to place a moratorium on on-shore shale gas and coal bed methane development until there was sufficient scientific studies completed and legislated regulations ...”. This request to governments asked for meaningful consultations about any proposed development, environmental impact assessments, independent base-line and ongoing testing of water, air and soil quality, full disclosure of drilling fluid composition, strategies that address and mitigate health and environmental impacts of the industry, adequate treatment of fracking wastewater, and an adequate compensation plan for damages caused by the industry. These conditions have still not been fulfilled so, in our opinion, the moratorium should not be lifted.

Despite the economic pressures we are currently facing from South of our border, the concerns about hydraulic fracking from 2012 are still relevant. Fracking requires massive volumes of water, with no safe methods to dispose of the process wastewater. Decision-making on water use should be based on recognizing water as a human right. The government’s obligation to protect means that it is obliged to prevent third parties from interfering with Nova Scotian’s enjoyment of that human right, water. This would mean protecting communities from pollution and inequitable extraction of water.

We are also deeply concerned about plans to expand fossil fuel extraction, eg. fracking for methane, at a time when we urgently need to transition away from fossil fuels. Building new fossil fuel infrastructure, be it fracking or pipelines, would only exacerbate the root cause of the severe flooding, monster wildfires, and heatwaves we are experiencing in Nova Scotia. Climate change has been identified as the greatest global threat of this century. Expanding fossil fuel infrastructure would be a major step backwards.

The long-term environmental impacts of uranium mining is equally concerning. It leaves a toxic legacy of radioactive waste with a half-life of tens of thousands of years. Uranium mining poses its own set of health hazards, related to radiation exposure from radioactive materials released into air, water and soil, and elevated levels of toxic metals. Uranium is not critical to address climate change since nuclear power is too expensive, too slow to come on-board, and it is increasingly uncompetitive with diversified renewable energies with storage. Uranium mining has significant Green House Gas emissions, plus radioactive emissions to our air, land and water. It is high risk distraction from real climate action. The legislated ban on uranium mining and exploration in this province was done with correct legislative process. Broad consultations were carried out and over 95% of the written submissions to Voluntary Planning said “NO” to uranium mining.

Repealing laws that protect against the fracking and uranium mining also undermine the province’s commitment to more climate-friendly initiatives for all Nova Scotians. We remind the Government that economic development tied to responsible renewable energy projects can bring economic prosperity to Nova Scotia without threatening the environment and the quality of life here. By maintaining our commitment to environmental protection while developing sustainable green industries, Nova Scotia can lead the way on innovative solutions that preserve the health, environmental, and economic legacy we wish to leave for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Van Schaick

Chair, Eco-Justice Working Group, United Church Regions East