



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation x	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: West Hants Regional Municipality Council

Submitted by: Mayor Abraham Zebian

Date: June 10, 2025

Subject: Mineral Resource Extraction

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Municipal Government Act

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

...Council direct staff to write a letter to the Government of Nova Scotia requesting a pause on issuing any resource exploration permits until more information on the issue can be shared with the community and Council to help inform residents.

...Council direct staff and Mayor to request a meeting with the Government of Nova Scotia and all relevant Ministers to discuss their plans for resource extraction in West Hants.

BACKGROUND

For many decades, the Province of NS has had a ban on Uranium Mining. Recently that ban has been lifted to allow for the exploration of Uranium with 3 sites being announced, including a 2300 Hectare site in Millet Brook, Lower Vaughan, West Hants.

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social ☐	Economic ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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DISCUSSION

The topic of Uranium exploration and extraction has been a much talked about item recently with the lifting of the ban by the Government of NS. Residents have been meeting and expressing their concerns with the possibility of well and water contamination and exposure to radon as a result of any future potential extraction of Uranium.

I believe Council should advocate for our residents and express our desire for the Government of NS to pause any issuing of permits until they are able to share more information on their plans and what safety precautions will be put in place to ensure our residents will not be adversely affected by any activity associated with Uranium extraction.

NEXT STEPS

Staff to undertake the direction of Council and reflect any costs during the 2025/2026 budget deliberations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications with the preparation or implementation of this report with the exception of staff time needed to prepare a letter.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may not choose to direct staff.

Council may choose to suggest something different.

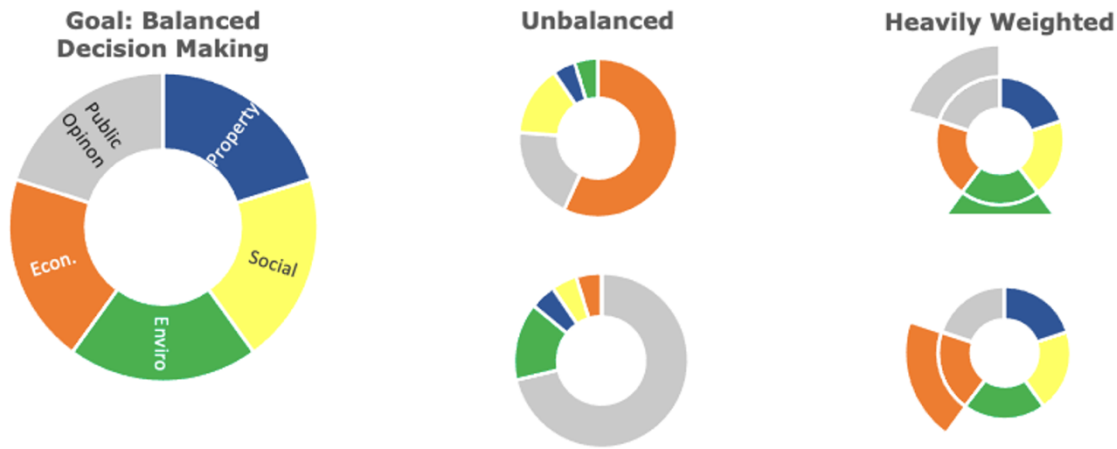
ATTACHMENTS

The following attachments are reflective of the correspondence that has occurred between the Province and the Municipality as it relates to this matter.

- February 11, 2025 Letter from Honourable John A. Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs Requesting Support for a reduction in inter-provincial trade barriers, and to resource development within our province.
- March 18, 2025 WHRM Letter to Minister Lohr Requesting Additional Information
- May 27, 2025 Letter from Department of Natural Resources to WHRM Re Landowner near Millet Brook
- May 30, 2025 Letter from Minister of Municipal Affairs Re Inquiry for Additional Information Re Resource Development in WHRM

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

Council has been provided with a reference taken from the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy , Appendix C “Decision Making by Council and Committee of the Whole” as a reminder of the principles highlighted for good decision making.



The Mayor has made some very valid points in relation to the lack of communications from The Province regarding this matter.

I support the recommendation pending Council’s review of the Mayor’s request for action.

Report Prepared by: Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Report Reviewed by: _____


Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer



**Municipal Affairs
Office of the Minister**

PO Box 216, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2M4 • Telephone 902 424-5550 Fax 902 424-0581 • novascotia.ca

February 11, 2025

Dear Mayors and Wardens:

Recent events in our world are changing the landscape of our province and country. We are experiencing new fiscal challenges that will have a significant impact on our economy. It is clear we need to become more self-reliant. And, at the same time, we need to better integrate our economy with other Canadian provinces and territories.

Our Government has recently announced that Nova Scotia must say “yes” to both a reduction in inter-provincial trade barriers, and to resource development within our province. Both steps need to be taken carefully and in consultation with our communities. Resource development, in particular, is of incredible importance.

If you are supportive and agree, I am asking for you and your council to signal your support for greater resource development within our province - by letter or press release.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Lohr'.

Honourable John A. Lohr
Minister of Municipal Affairs

c: Chief Administrative Officers
Juanita Spencer, NSFM



March 18, 2025

Sent electronically to: dmamin@novascotia.ca

Dear Honourable Minister John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board

RE: Minister Lohr's February 11, 2025 Letter requesting support

Please accept the following letter on behalf of the Council for the West Hants Regional Municipality (WHRM) regarding your letter sent to all municipalities on February 11th requesting that municipalities – either in writing or by press release – support the government's recently announcement that Nova Scotia must say "yes" to both a reduction in inter-provincial trade barriers, and to resource development within our province.

Following receipt of this letter, WHRM received several pieces of correspondence from residents expressing concerns over the government's perceived plan to put forward a bill that would lift blanket bans on uranium exploration and hydraulic fracking of fossil fuels. These same residents urged West Hants Regional Municipal elected officials to reflect carefully on the request before providing unreserved support.

During the February 25, 2025 meeting, the letter received from Minister Lohr, along with the several other pieces of correspondence from residents within the Municipality, sparked a lengthy discussion among Council members. Throughout the discussion, Council emphasized the importance and need for more information around the request made by Minister Lohr as it did not provide any specific details or plans.

To better understand this matter, we would appreciate it if you could provide information on the Province's plan and benefits regarding resource extraction and plans to address public safety and water quality in West Hants.

To formally express the current position of the Council who met on February 25, 2025, to discuss this matter the following motion was ratified:

"the Municipality respond to Minister Lohr's letter by asking for more details about the Province's plans concerning resource extraction in West Hants, how the Municipality might be involved in the

development of resources, how the Province anticipates this resource development might benefit West Hants, and how public safety; particularly water quality will be guaranteed along the way”.

West Hants Regional Municipality thanks you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,



Abraham Zebian, Mayor

ds/az

CC: Premier of Nova Scotia, The Honorable Tim Houston
Member of Parliament for Kings-Hants, Kody Blois
Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA Hants West
WHRM Council
Chief Administrative Officer, Mark Phillips

May 27, 2025

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF HANTS WEST

PO BOX 3000

WINDSOR NS B0N2T0

Dear Landowner,

I am writing to inform you about recent changes to uranium exploration in Nova Scotia and to outline your rights as a landowner near Millet Brook, which is an area where exploration is likely to take place.

The provincial government recently repealed legislation that previously banned uranium exploration and mining in Nova Scotia. This change allows us to do research that increases our knowledge about uranium in the province. This will help us develop potential economic opportunities that will bring jobs and investment to Nova Scotia. It will also help people manage their health and safety in terms of well water and radon gas in homes and buildings.

There are three areas of the province where we know there is a greater presence of uranium (Millet Brook, Hants County; Louisville, Pictou County; and East Dalhousie, Annapolis County). We have launched a request for proposals to seek experienced professionals to conduct research and exploration activities in these areas. We will only give exploration licences to companies that show they will do the work safely and maintain environmental excellence.

We want to inform you that your property falls completely or partially within one of these areas. As a property owner, it is important that you understand your rights:

1. **Permission:** Companies that have mineral rights (exploration license) must seek your permission before exploring on your land.
2. **Negotiated Agreements:** If you are willing to allow exploration, you and the company can negotiate an agreement outlining conditions and compensation. The vast majority of these agreements are reached independently between landowners and companies.

3. **Surface Rights vs. Mineral Rights:** Land ownership (surface rights) in Nova Scotia does not include the mineral rights below the surface – they are owned by the Crown.
4. **Exploration Activities:** If you agree to exploration on your property, it might start with activities that do not disturb the land – like walking the land to examine rocks and soil or collecting hand samples. Any activities that disturb the land (such as drilling) require additional permits from the government.
5. **Land Remediation:** Companies are required to remediate any disturbance they make to your land. That means restoring it to the state it was in before exploration started.

This request for proposals is not our usual process. We are taking this approach to make sure only qualified companies with proper experience in uranium are granted licenses to explore. In the rest of the province, we are using our standard licensing process. We are hopeful that Nova Scotians will consider the economic and health benefits of exploration as they consider the request of a company.

For more information about the request for proposals, please visit:

<https://novascotia.ca/uranium-exploration-request-for-proposals/>. You can also contact the Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles at 902-424-4068 or Novaroc@novascotia.ca if you need more information.

Finally, because you own property in an area where we know there is uranium, we encourage you to use the following resources for your health and safety:

- Well water testing: <https://novascotia.ca/well-water-testing/>
- Radon gas: <https://novascotia.ca/make-sense-of-radon/>

Sincerely,

Janice Zinck

Executive Director, Geoscience and Mines Branch



**Municipal Affairs
Office of the Minister**

PO Box 216, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2M4 • Telephone 902 424-5550 Fax 902 424-0581 • novascotia.ca

May 30, 2025

Your Worship Abraham Zebian
Mayor of West Hants Regional Municipality
Via Email: azebian@westhants.ca

Dear Mayor Zebian:

Thank you for your letter of March 18, 2025, regarding your request for more information with respect to the Province's plans regarding resource extraction and water quality in the West Hants Regional Municipality. I sincerely apologize for the delay in getting back to you.

All levels of government must work together to ensure that Nova Scotians can benefit from our abundant natural resources in a sustainable manner. Municipalities and the Province have the same interest in identifying economic development opportunities that will ensure long-term prosperity for our residents. Further development of our resource sectors generates more revenue for governments that will be used to enhance the programs, services and infrastructure we all depend on.

We also share the responsibility of protecting the environment. Nova Scotians can be confident that any development opportunities will be carefully considered for their environmental impact and that our strong environmental laws and regulations will ensure that the environment remains protected, while allowing sustainable development to proceed.

The world is demanding critical minerals to help with the transition to net zero by 2050. Everyone wants a reliable supply from places where mining is ethical and responsible. Nova Scotia can be that source, creating jobs and other economic benefits for Nova Scotians.

The transition to a carbon-neutral, clean-energy world relies on a wide range of minerals to power renewable technologies and low-emission energy systems. Critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements are essential for batteries, wind turbines, and solar panels, while copper and aluminum support electrical grids and energy efficiency. Additionally, uranium plays a key role in nuclear energy, providing a stable, low-carbon power source to complement renewables and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Uranium exists in Nova Scotia, but because of restrictions since the 1980s, we have been prevented from even researching it. We don't know exactly where it is, how much there is, or what it means for Nova Scotians. That is why on March 26, 2025, we repealed the *Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act*. This will allow us to better understand the uranium present in Nova Scotia.

Any mine would need to get licenses and permits for exploration from the Department of Natural Resources to confirm the availability of minerals before they can seek an environmental assessment for extraction from the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change.

When a company is ready to move from exploration to developing a mine, including uranium mining, the project must undergo the Class I environmental assessment process, which is a rigorous regulatory process that carefully considers the benefits and potential environmental impacts of a project, along with how such impacts will be mitigated to ensure the environment and human health remain protected. Decisions are based on science, evidence and consultation with the Mi'kmaq and public. For more information on our modernized environmental assessment process, visit: <https://novascotia.ca/environmental-assessment-getting-started/>.

Uranium mining is also heavily regulated federally by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Uranium mines in Canada that produce over 2,500 tonnes a day also require a federal impact assessment. You can find out more about federal regulations at: <https://www.cnsccsn.gc.ca/eng/>.

Onshore oil and gas activities are regulated under the *Petroleum Resources Act* and the *Environment Act* to ensure any operations are done safely, following good oilfield practice. All the natural gas currently used for homes and businesses in Nova Scotia flows from or through the United States. Our government is taking the time to learn from our Canadian counterparts to make sure any future applications are held to the highest standard.

Nova Scotia has high environmental standards, and no projects will be approved unless we know they can be done safely and responsibly. This isn't a choice – we can protect our environment and have a strong economy. The Nova Scotia *Environment Act* was designed to allow for both the safeguarding of our environment and development to co-exist. It recognizes that a strong economy depends upon sound environmental management and that effective environmental protection depends on a strong economy. It provides for sustainable projects that benefit society in a way that protects the environment and human health. We can do both and do both well.

We understand that all of this work will require close collaboration with our municipal partners and with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to determine how to move forward in a sustainable way, while supporting our economy for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. We look forward to working with you in this regard.

Sincerely,



Honourable John A. Lohr
Minister of Municipal Affairs

c: Honourable Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia
Honourable Tory Rushton, Minister of Natural Resources
Honourable Trevor Boudreau, Minister of Energy