

Bill #39

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Ecology Action Centre Presentation on Bill 39 to Nova Scotia Legislature Law Amendments Committee,
October 29, 2009

My name is Jocelyne Rankin. I am the water coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre. I am speaking today on behalf of Mark Butler, our Policy Director who unfortunately could not be here this afternoon because of child care responsibilities. While Mark could not attend, we felt it was important to appear today to express our strong support for this legislation. As a result I will read a short statement, but not having a background in this area, I will probably be unable to answer questions with any depth.

EAC applauds the Government for introducing the Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Bill and the two opposition parties for supporting it. Bill 39 is good policy and the right thing to do for two reasons. First, because of Nova Scotia's geography, hydrology and demography, the risk to human health and the ecosystem from uranium mining is too great. Any short-term benefits from the mining of uranium are not worth the short- and long-term costs and when we are talking about radiation, we really are talking long-term costs. We do not want to leave mining wastes and contaminated ground and water which will be a liability and require ~~and~~ containment for millennia.

The second reason for passing this legislation is that it has the overwhelming support of Nova Scotians. Opposition to uranium mining has been consistent and enduring. During the McLeave Enquiry in the 1980s the majority of participants were opposed to the mining of uranium in Nova Scotia. The issue of uranium was strongly and widely raised during the Voluntary Planning sessions on the Natural Resource Strategy over the last year. The Panel's report, 'Our Common Ground', states " While the committee heard several calls for lifting the moratorium, overall the public input received through this process overwhelmingly indicated a desire to see the moratorium maintained and legislated." Of the 600 written submissions made to the Panel (and available on the web) about 350 mentioned uranium mining and of those, 90% were in favour of continuing the moratorium or implementing a ban.

The support for this legislation comes from both urban and rural areas, if anything, concern about uranium mining is probably highest in rural Nova Scotia, in Hants County, the Valley and on the South Shore. We know that there are a number of people from the Valley who would have liked to have been here today, but couldn't because of the short notice and previous commitments. I believe 6 rural municipal councils have passed motions supporting a moratorium or ban.

In closing we find Bill 39 to be sound. We trust there are no loopholes which would result in exposure of Nova Scotians to uranium mining and radiation and we ask the members to be diligent and vigilant. We would recommend that the daily fine be increased to act as a true deterrent.

As the Voluntary Panel heard, there is overwhelming support for this legislation from Nova Scotians, by passing this bill you are responding to the democratic will of Nova Scotians.

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