
From: Graham Smith <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, April 23, 2016 9:17 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Changes to the Mineral Resources Act

To: Law Amendments Committee

I would attend the Apr-25 meeting of the Law Amendments Committee if I were able. Please consider the following inputs as a summary of what I'd have said in person.

I am Director of the Sage Environmental Program and a retired Nova Scotia businessman. I respect the need to grow our economy, and the contribution that some mineral extraction projects can make toward this end. I also respect the integrity of natural places - they protect our water supplies, create wildlife habitat, and protect recreational opportunities for Nova Scotians. They also have an economic benefits such as tourism, which could be damaged by some mining activities.

My recommendation in regard to the Mineral Resources Act is that the Government accept the recommendations of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to create a balanced, transparent process for evaluating ecological values and mineral potential on private conservation lands. As a minimum, the section on ministerial discretion to withdraw certain lands from mineral development should be expanded to include specifically conservation lands that have been brought under protection by conservation trusts. Preferably, the level of authority should reside with the Cabinet rather than the Minister. This would provide the certainty needed to meet international (IUCN) standards, so that our lands count towards national protection and biodiversity reporting.

These changes would have a number of other benefits. They would remove uncertainty for conservation groups, landowners and industry, provide consistent policy across government and help avoid future conflicts. From the conservation standpoint, lands that have been identified as suitable for protection, at significant public and private costs, would in reality become better protected. From the industry viewpoint, there would be greater certainty regarding development prospects for particular areas. The percentage of our province's area that is protected by trusts is small, so there would be little opportunity loss for the industry. Donors to the conservation trusts would be more certain that their donations would be legitimate in the eyes of revenue agencies. It would be a better situation all around.

Thank you for the opportunity to make input. I would be pleased to discuss this further if there were an opportunity.

Graham Smith

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