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Sent: March 14, 2025 4:12 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: NatureNS submission to Public Bills, 1 and 6
Attachments: NatureNS submission to Law Amendments Bill 6-draft.pdf

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Please accept this written submission to Public Bills for Bills 1 and 4.

We are still interested in speaking to the committee on Monday but given we haven't heard back about a time may we assume there was not space? We would also be interested in presenting virtually if that's an option.

Thank you.

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Brief

Date: Mar 11th, 2025

To: Nova Scotia Public Bills (formerly Law Amendments) Committee

From: Nature Nova Scotia (also known as the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists)

Re: Bill 1 - An Act Respecting Government Organization and Administration and Bill 6 - An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy, and Natural Resources

Nature Nova Scotia is the federation of natural history societies and other nature groups in Nova Scotia. We are a charity and registered society in Nova Scotia dedicated to the promotion and stewardship of nature through networking, education, research, and advocacy. Our network coordinates the only NGO-led moose conservation initiative in the province, studying both population trends and public desires around moose and related wildlife management. We coordinate the Harbours of Halifax and Sydney Waterbirds Monitoring project, creating baseline data available to inform assessments under future environmental disaster scenarios. We engage young Nova Scotians in opportunities for natural history learning, are building capacity for BIPOC leadership in nature conservation, and we provide educational content and programming for Nova Scotians of all ages. When needed, we take on an activist role to promote responsible natural resources management and nature conservation. Government may remember, in 2020, naturalists from our network brought the province to court for its failure to deliver on duties under the Endangered Species Act. We also foster collaboration amongst our member groups. Collectively, we represent over 10,000 Nova Scotians.

We are extremely concerned with the sweeping changes proposed to existing legislation in Bill 6 and the way new legislation is being introduced in Bills 1 and 6, without a link to government's current mandate and without public consultation. This government has repeatedly criticized existing bans as not being guided by science when the processes that led to both the fracking and uranium mining bans were lengthy, science-informed exercises guided by years of best practice review and research and which were complimented by extensive public consultation. You may remember that Mi'kmaq leadership, in particular, were strongly opposed to fracking for natural gas in Mi'kma'ki.

At the same time, government dismisses experts in environmental fields, some of the same experts who contributed to existing legislation, who express opposition to these changes as "special interest" groups and "professional protesters". Considering the number of citizens we have heard from over the last several weeks, the several hundred who gathered at the recent rally at the legislature, the lack of clarification from

government on who exactly represents these “special interests”, and the risk this new direction poses to existing natural resource industries, we have taken the Premier's description of opposition to include environmental charities, fishers, woodlot owners, rural landowners, scientists, physicians, and anyone else who isn't a mining executive. We submit this brief on Bill 1 and 6 to the Public Bills Committee in defence of those citizens and of our shared natural capital.

We urge government to reconsider these dramatic changes and maintain existing bans on fracking and uranium mining and proceed no further on legislation relating to these or lithium mining without public and Mi'kmaq consultation. We secondarily warn government against sewing further division amongst the Nova Scotian public by strategically vilifying and dismissing science, the media, and environmentalists, lest we follow previous allies into an anti-intellectual, autocratic, fascist state where both nature and people suffer.

Bill 1 - An Act Respecting Government Organization and Administration

Following significant backlash from the public, this government has already promised to withdraw proposed changes that would weaken the independence of the Auditor General's office. Bill 1 would have allowed government to keep the audit reports hidden from the public and to fire the Auditor General with a 2/3 majority vote which conveniently matches the majority this government currently holds. We support your decision to follow public desire on this count. Still, Bill 1 gives much power to government around rejecting requests under Freedom of Information. These reports are vital for the media and organizations like ours who have a mandate to follow and critique government decision making and to share that information with our communities. To restrict Nova Scotians access to information is to have government act in secrecy. In a province long plagued by a lack of transparency in government decision making, Bill 1 would only make things worse.

Bill 6 - An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy, and Natural Resources

On Fracking for Natural Gas

Nova Scotia is (supposedly) committed to a transition away from fossil fuels and towards green energy operations that will reduce energy costs for the average Nova Scotian and help us meet carbon emission goals. Natural gas burns more cleanly and emits less carbon dioxide than coal, but the risk of methane leakage associated with fracking may cancel out the greenhouse gas budgeting benefit of transitioning away from coal. Fracking for natural gas is banned either temporarily or permanently in

Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland, as well as many American states and across some European nations. In Newfoundland, the particularly strong opposition to fracking came from small rural communities, as did the organizing to ban fracking in Nova Scotia. Reversing the ban on fracking will undo the decades of consultation that has already occurred, signals that this government does not respect its legal duty to consultation with the Mi'kmaq, and threatens Nova Scotia's contribution to global climate change mitigation goals.

On Uranium Mining

Previous exploration for uranium on public and private land caused significant distress amongst Nova Scotians, especially in rural parts of the province, and was the reason a grassroots movement emerged to push for the ban. Several municipalities supported the provincial ban for concerns over the health of their communities and natural environment. Other jurisdictions are moving away from nuclear as they transition to green energy options. Uranium mining uses a large amount of water and requires significant storage and remediation capabilities. Tailings are radioactive for thousands of years after mining and must be stored carefully to avoid leaking radiation to the environment and communities. Uranium is typically mined in an open-pit operation similar to how gold is mined in Nova Scotia, having an extensive impact on the landscape it is situated in. Given Nova Scotia's experience with that other unnecessary resource, gold, Nova Scotians are right to be nervous about opening the province up to uranium mining. During the 6 years the Touquoy open pit gold mine operated, the company broke 23 provincial and 3 federal laws that were in place to protect the environment and is now in a lawsuit with the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change attempting to avoid their required mine remediation.

On Lithium Mining

Lithium is an important mineral in the global movement towards cleaner technologies, especially in electric vehicles and renewable energy storage. Demand for lithium in recent years has surged and both the Government of Canada and the Province recognize lithium as a "critical mineral," promoting mining as part of the green energy transition. The concentrations of Nova Scotian lithium deposits are low and mining lithium comes with a high environmental cost. Like many other kinds of mining, lithium mining requires large amounts of water and energy and leaves behind polluted environments that need to be remediated. Nova Scotia's lithium deposits are largely located in the Annapolis Valley, an important agricultural hotspot and home to a large proportion of our population. The province generates revenue from mining through royalties paid by companies. As a result, mining has produced profits for large foreign companies while contributing minimally to the Nova Scotian economy. Given how little

and inaccessible Nova Scotia's lithium stores are, it is not likely to be a productive industry, certainly not when compared with existing natural resource industries. Mining overall contributes little to Nova Scotia GDP and employs few citizens compared the other natural resource industries that both uranium and lithium mining threaten. This will not change when government caves to mining lobby groups and sells our province to foreign mining empires for low gains and high environmental costs.

Government has described these extreme measures as a justified response to extreme policies coming from the United States. Please remember who you serve and that our intact environment is more than a chip to be wasted on a gamble.

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