

Linda Scherzinger

To: The Honourable members of the Public Bills Committee

I am speaking on behalf of KAIROS Halifax to urge the government of Nova Scotia to maintain the ban on hydraulic fracturing and to retain the Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act

KAIROS Halifax is related to KAIROS Canada, a coalition of 10 Canadian, national, churches and religious organizations working with others for ecological justice and human rights locally and globally. As a faith-based organization, we are called to be vigilant in our efforts to protect God's Creation and to live sustainably within natural limits. Hydraulic fracturing is invasive and destructive to our planet. We honour our Indigenous neighbours' spirituality which holds sacred the Earth, water and all of Mother Earth. We join with Nova Scotians who are determined to protect the Earth and water for the sake of our children and future generations.

KAIROS Halifax was active in the province-wide campaign in 2014 which brought about the ban on fracking. There are many ways that fracking threatens the health and well-being of all Nova Scotians and the environment on which we depend.

Fracking raises significant social and ecological justice concerns related to the rights of Indigenous peoples, public health, air and water contamination, groundwater depletion, the triggering of seismic activity, and the release of methane which is a greenhouse gas 86 to 105 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20-year period. These are increasingly well-documented and broad consensus points of major hazards of fracking.

In 2014 Nova Scotia's Energy Minister introduced "legislation to prohibit high-volume hydraulic fracturing for onshore shale gas" indefinitely due to the public's overwhelming concern. The decision followed a report by an independent panel that recommended that fracking not proceed until there is more research into its health, environment and economic impacts and a mechanism is established for community consultations.

All relevant experience and research since the provincial decision to prohibit fracking in Nova Scotia has shown that the health, environment and economic impacts or consequences are no safer now than when the ban was set in place, and in most cases these impacts have worsened. Furthermore, there has not been a mechanism established for community consultations.

In Bill 6, clause 21 should be deleted to retain the Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act. Besides the risk of radioactive leaks, the waste disposal problem of radioactive material, and serious health impacts, the World Nuclear Association is emphatic that there is no shortage of uranium and explicitly states: "There is therefore no reason to anticipate any shortage of uranium that would prevent conventional nuclear power from playing an expanding role in providing the world's energy needs for decades or even centuries to come."

KAIROS identifies key ethical values and core Christian beliefs that are the basis for discernment:

- a) We believe that the world as God's handiwork has its own inherent worth and value.
- b) We believe that we share in God's covenanted relationship with all of Creation.
- c) We believe that the way we treat the poor, the vulnerable, and all Creation is a reflection of our faithfulness to God.
- d) We believe that God wants people to live in mercy, compassion and mutual respect of other humans and all Creation, and that this will be the basis for peace and justice.
- e) We believe that God intends restoration through Christ, inviting our collaboration in acts of healing and transformation.

KAIROS supports principles and other guides for decision-making:

The principle of subsidiarity holds that decisions should be taken wherever possible by the communities most affected, rather than by higher levels of government.

The precautionary principle holds that actions should not be undertaken if their consequences are uncertain and potentially dangerous. This is a fundamental tenet of ecological justice.

Canadian courts must be committed to respect Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent. Specifically, the Court has ruled that the Crown must obtain the consent of First Nations before resource development projects can proceed on their land, unless there is a "compelling and substantial public purpose" for infringing on Aboriginal title.

Climate Change Poses an Unprecedented Threat to Life on Earth. Continuing to burn fossil fuels at the current rate will render most of our planet uninhabitable.

Decisions on whether to call for further bans or moratoria on fracking should be made locally in consultation with all the communities most affected, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Seeking new forms of economic development is essential for our province, especially in view of tariffs being imposed, but there are better ways to pursue than extraction of natural resources in a time of climate crisis. Redoubling efforts to support energy conservation, and renewable energy development programs to assure a clean and sustainable energy supply and create employment in local communities are surely what needs to be pursued for the common good of all Nova Scotians now and in the future.