



## **Comments on Bill 6 - An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources**

**Presentation to the Public Bills Committee - March 17, 2025**

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Sierra Club Canada is a national grassroots organization that empowers people to protect and restore healthy ecosystems. We are a member-based organization, with five Chapters. Our Atlantic Canada Chapter has championed clean energy, getting children outside connecting and exploring nature, and restoring our relationship with nature.

While I am speaking to Bill 6 today, I also want to express deep concern specifically about Bill 1 and other efforts to decrease government accountability. It was access to public information that ultimately resulted in the protection of Owl's Head Provincial Park rather than its sale. Ultimately protection of nature and a healthy environment relies on people having accurate information and government accountability.

We recommend sections of Bill 6 that would lift bans on fracking and uranium mining being removed, or that the Bill be withdrawn.

The current government is actively attempting to reduce access to information and government accountability. In that context, fracking and uranium mining are to be considered even more dangerous today than when they were first prohibited after broad public consultation.

"Move fast and break things" seems to be the order of today's Nova Scotia's government. The government has implied we need to frack and mine uranium in order to increase our ability to control our destiny as Canadians, and as Nova Scotians. Allowing fracking and uranium mining will do exactly the reverse for three main reasons:

- 1. We will put at risk our progress on climate change;**
- 2. We will diminish our focus on real solutions; and**
- 3. We will be less secure if the bans on uranium and fracking are lifted.**

### **1. We will put at risk our progress on climate change**

My first reaction to Bill 6 was what a betrayal to youth and their families who marched for climate justice, marches some members of this government have participated in.

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Like many of you, and your constituents I breathed smokey air and heard the sirens as firefighters and emergency responders fought climate change accelerated fires in 2023. We know that wildfires, hurricanes, and unpredictable weather are only going to get worse if we continue to allow activities like fracking to proceed .

Allowing fracking will unleash even more methane pollution into the atmosphere. Methane is a supercharged greenhouse gas. A 2019 study of increasing methane in the atmosphere determined "that shale-gas production in North America over the past decade may have contributed more than half of all of the increased emissions from fossil fuels globally and approximately one-third of the total increased emissions from all sources globally over the past decade."<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, allowing fracking threatens to reverse hard won progress to reduce GHG emissions and get off coal in Nova Scotia.

## **2. We will diminish our focus on real solutions**

As an organization, Sierra Club Canada champions energy democracy, and in creating greater opportunities for everyone to engage in and benefit from clean energy generation. The Nova Scotia government has made moves to open up the electrical system to participants other than NS Power. This is a first step. Last week, we finally increased our capacity to exchange electrons across the border with New Brunswick: we challenged you to double this capacity even further to create greater energy security and make local, scalable renewables more likely to occur.

If we are going to move fast, let's move fast and **make things (not break them)**, and energy democracy is the direction the government should go in to seize this moment.

I would add that working with communities and upholding Mi'kmaq rights ~~holders'~~ to develop these solutions should be the primary focus of our elected leaders.

## **3. We will be less secure if the bans on uranium and fracking are lifted**

You have heard today from physicians and other experts who are concerned that toxins from fracking and uranium mining elevate health risks to Nova Scotians, through contamination of water, air, and land.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bg.copernicus.org/articles/16/3033/2019/>

With a population scattered across a relatively small landbase, over 40% of whom rely on groundwater wells for their drinking water, I can envision no part of Nova Scotia where uranium mining or fracking could be carried out safely. Whether you represent Lunenburg West or Sydney-Whitney Pier or Yarmouth, NS: safeguarding this water should be your top priority, particularly in a time of global uncertainty.

You heard today that fracking in Nova Scotia resulted in a tailings pond Nova Scotians had to clean up. There is no way to clean up chemicals which could contaminate the water table in perpetuity. People, particularly pregnant women and children, are at higher risk from diseases like cancer, asthma, and even increased mortality rates have been reported in areas where fracking is taking place.

Nuclear power and natural gas are also expensive compared with renewables and energy efficiency, and would decrease the energy security for people in Nova Scotia, a province already known for its high rates of energy poverty, with 43% of households spending 6% or more of their after-tax income on home energy needs.”<sup>2</sup>

If the thinking here is that we will somehow refine uranium and develop “local” nuclear power, this will also come at a great cost. A report from the Clean Air Alliance in which they cite Lazard, one of the most respected names in global financial services, the cost of electricity from a new nuclear reactor is 1.7 times greater than the cost of offshore wind, three times greater than the cost of solar power, and 3.6 times greater than the cost of onshore wind.<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusion

I do not believe I will shift the votes of the members present through this presentation. However I do have faith that Nova Scotians will continue to oppose fracking and uranium mining as they have done successfully in the past. I also hope and urge you all to move forward with solutions that will safeguard progress we’ve made on climate change and focus on real solutions to the current moment of global uncertainty .

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://ecologyaction.ca/resources-media/press-releases/new-report-outlines-proposed-solution-nova-scotias-energy-poverty#:~:text=A%20Way%20Forward:%20A%20Made,the%20highest%20proportion%20in%20Canada.>

<sup>3</sup>

[https://www.cleanairalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Darlington-New-Nuclear-Report-ONLINE-aug-01-v\\_02.pdf](https://www.cleanairalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Darlington-New-Nuclear-Report-ONLINE-aug-01-v_02.pdf)