

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Tuesday, May 27, 2025**

**Legislative Chamber**

**Implementing the Critical Minerals Strategy**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Tom Taggart (Chair)  
Kyle MacQuarrie (Vice Chair)  
John White  
David Bowlby  
Julie Vanexan  
Susan Leblanc  
Krista Gallagher  
Hon. Iain Rankin  
Hon. Derek Mombourquette

[Krista Gallagher was replaced by Lisa Lachance.]  
[Julie Vanexan was replaced by Brad McGowan.]

In Attendance:

Tamer Nusseibeh  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Genevieve Harvey  
Legislative Counsel

**WITNESSES**

Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs

Chief Tamara Young, Pictou Landing First Nation  
Patrick Butler, Senior Mi'kmaq Energy and Mines Advisor - Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative  
Jessica Ginsburg, Barrister and Solicitor - Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative

Department of Natural Resources

Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister  
Janice Zinck, Executive Director, Geoscience and Mines

EDM Resources Inc.

Mark Haywood, President and CEO

Goldfields Group

John Wightman, Managing Director

Mining Association of Nova Scotia

Sean Kirby, Executive Director



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2025**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**1:00 P.M.**

CHAIR  
Tom Taggart

VICE CHAIR  
Kyle MacQuarrie

THE CHAIR: Order. I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaw people. This territory is covered by Treaties of Peace and Friendship with Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy people first signed with the British Crown in 1726. We also acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years, and we honour and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who have come before us on this land.

My name is Tom Taggart. I'm the MLA for Colchester North and Chair of this committee. Today, we shall hear from witnesses regarding Implementing the Critical Minerals Strategy. Before we begin, I would like to ask everyone to turn off their phones or put them on silent. In the case of emergency, please use the Granville Street exit and go to Grand Parade. Granville Street is, for those who aren't from here, to our right, out the back door.

I will now ask the committee members to introduce themselves for the record by stating their name and their constituency. I'll start on my left here.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I would also like to note the presence of Legislative Counsel Genevieve Harvey and Legislative Committee Clerk Tamer Nusseibeh.

Our topic is Implementing the Critical Minerals Strategy. I would like to welcome all the witnesses today and ask if they'd like to introduce themselves. Then we'll begin with opening remarks. We'll start with Chief Young.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. We're going to start with opening statements. We'll offer to Chief Young first. I just want to say we like to try to keep them from three to five minutes so we can get into the questioning. If you're coming up short, you'll have an opportunity at the end to make additional closing comments.

CHIEF TAMARA YOUNG: Kwe' and good afternoon, members of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Standing Committee, guests, and colleagues. As mentioned before, my name is Chief Tamara Young, and I'm here today on behalf of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs as a portfolio lead for Environment, Energy and Mines. With me is Patrick Butler, our Senior Mi'kmaq Energy and Mines Advisor and Jessica Ginsburg, legal counsel for Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn. They are prepared to respond to any technical or legal questions that may arise.

I want to begin by thanking the committee for inviting us to participate in this important conversation. It is essential that committees hear from all perspectives, ours in particular, as we claim title to the land and resources. The implementation of Nova Scotia's Critical Minerals Strategy presents a real opportunity for meaningful engagement, but that engagement must be grounded in mutual respect and a commitment to genuine collaboration.

Frankly, that engagement should have come much earlier in the process than where we are now. As constitutional rightsholders across the lands, waters and resources of Nova Scotia, we expect to be part of early discussions before decisions are made. We should not hear about important developments that Nova Scotia is making from the evening news. This includes when policy or legislative changes are being proposed in the mining sector. We have a number of mechanisms in place where information should be shared directly. This is how respectful relationships are built and how time-consuming disputes can be avoided down the line.

On March 28, 2025, the Assembly expressed concerns with hydraulic fracturing and uranium mining in Nova Scotia to both the Premier and Nova Scotians in general. It appears that we are not being heard. We have serious concerns about how provincial decisions are being made without advance notice to and transparent conversations with the

Mi'kmaq. Too often, we are informed only after decisions are made, which erodes trust and hinders progress in the nation-to-nation relationship we are working to build.

When it comes to consultation on mining exploration and mineral developments, that consultation must be early, consistent, and meaningful. Consulting the Mi'kmaq is not just a box to be checked. We have a consultation process in place that Nova Scotia is a signatory to. This process outlines how we are to be consulted. Let's not forget that the onus is on the Crown. The Province has a constitutional and legal duty to consult.

We do not want to stand in the way of ethical and sustainable mining developments, but we will not support any process that treats out constitutional rights as an afterthought. It is the honour of the Crown and a legal obligation that cannot be overlooked. The ultimate purpose of the honour of the Crown is reconciliation.

We believe that it is time for the Province to update its consultation practices, with the Mi'kmaq directly involved in shaping those changes. This includes updating the Proponents' Guide currently available on the Office of L'nu Affairs website to reflect clear and consistent standards. We were consulted on the original document over 10 years ago. It's time to revisit and improve that document. Consistent and reliable communication from Nova Scotia's departments, including Natural Resources, Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and L'nu Affairs, is essential.

There must be transparency and predictability around what triggers the duty to consult, including mining projects on private lands. Proponents need to have clear understanding of how to engage and consult with the Mi'kmaq when consultation is delegated, and consistent consequences that Nova Scotia is holding them accountable to when those expectations are not met. There is also a need for adequate funding to ensure that our KMK technicians are meaningfully engaged on our behalf and able to provide technical support in informing our decisions. As acknowledged by the courts, the issue of the appropriate funding is essential to a fair and balanced consultation process to ensure a level playing field. This includes continued support for our energy and mining staff members, consultation efforts, and access to external resources, as needed.

For years, we have seen other provinces such as Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, and New Brunswick engage in resource revenue-sharing agreements with First Nations in the mining sector. These agreements are geared toward improving government-to-government relationships, advancing reconciliation, and providing socio-economic benefits to communities. Resource revenue sharing can provide more immediate and widespread benefits and potential supply chain opportunities down the road, and we question if the Province is exploring similar agreements here.

We also need commitments from critical mineral proponents that they are involving the rightsholders at the earliest opportunity. More proponents must follow the path of reconciliation. That involves working alongside the First Peoples. We recognize and

appreciate the commitments outlined in Pillar Three, Opportunities with Mi'kmaw Partners, in the Critical Minerals Strategy. This section highlights opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. This could be a good starting point - one that we hope to build on through continued dialogue and action.

On behalf of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs, I want to thank you again for this opportunity to speak. We look forward to answering any questions you may have. Wela'lioq.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Young.

Deputy Minister Gatien, please.

KAREN GATIEN: Good afternoon. I'm happy to be here today to talk about Nova Scotia's critical mineral potential and all that the Province is doing to make sure that Nova Scotians get all possible benefits for developing these natural resources while also enjoying safe communities and a healthy environment.

As was already mentioned, I'm joined by Janice Zinck, our executive director of Geoscience and Mines, who has far more technical knowledge than I do and will ably assist with answering your questions.

Nova Scotia is geographically small but geologically diverse. We have most of the minerals on Canada's Critical Minerals List. We created our own list and shared it in December 2022, and it is included in our Critical Minerals Strategy, which we released in March 2024. Just two weeks ago, we updated our list with four more critical minerals. We added, as well, a set of four strategic minerals that are economic drivers or have other benefits for the province. Our strategy and lists help focus ourselves and our industry on the greatest opportunities for Nova Scotia.

We know that the demand for critical minerals is growing steadily because the world needs them for all of the technologies to reach net-zero by 2050. By that time, we anticipate the demand will be up more than 170 per cent for copper, nearly 400 per cent for graphite, and more than 1,500 per cent for lithium. We have all of those minerals and more in Nova Scotia, so there's tremendous opportunity to be part of the global solutions for green energy, to supply materials for things like cellphones that we all use every day and to secure jobs for our people, attract investments for our communities, and grow our economy.

Mining brings the benefit of high-paying technical jobs to rural areas, where more Nova Scotians can thrive. The industry accounts for at least 2,500 jobs in the province that pay an average of \$100,000 a year in wages and benefits. We would like to see more of those good-paying jobs through the reasonable and responsible development of our natural

resources, so we're taking action to support our mining industry to help bring those benefits to Nova Scotia.

Every year, we invest in this industry through the Mineral Resources Development Fund. It provides about \$1.5 million to help the sector with exploration, research, and more. We're also dedicating \$500,000 in Budget 2025-26 to critical minerals. We will use that money and money through federal agreements for geoscience to learn more about our critical mineral potential and to inform development.

Across government, we're working to make the permitting process clearer and more efficient while still having the same degree of oversight and rigorous review. In the Spring sitting of the Legislature, government repealed the ban on uranium exploration and mining, and now we're moving to unlock opportunity for the industry to seek potential development and to regain knowledge about uranium that's been lost for decades.

Through a request for proposals, we will engage qualified companies with a proven track record for safety and environmental responsibility. They will explore three areas of the province with a greater presence of uranium. The knowledge they gather could lead to new mining opportunities for Nova Scotia, mining that could be done under the strict regulation of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and follow our provincial environmental and safety laws as well. The knowledge will also help to protect the health and safety of Nova Scotians in terms of well water and radon in homes and buildings.

I want to note that it's not just mining that brings jobs and dollars into our province. Exploration alone generates anywhere from \$35 million to \$50 million per year and provides good jobs for people across the province. Moving on opportunities for exploration means creating new jobs now. It means creating opportunities for Nova Scotians to come home, build their lives here, and help create prosperity for a whole province. It means opening the door to billions more in production when mines are developed, and we can do all of that safely and responsibly for the benefit of Nova Scotians. That's our focus. I look forward to taking your questions. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

Mr. Kirby.

SEAN KIRBY: Climate goals rely on mining because things like electric vehicles, wind turbines, and solar panels are largely made of minerals. The International Energy Agency says the world needs six times more minerals for clean energy in order to achieve goals like net-zero. There simply are not enough mines in the world to provide the quantity of minerals needed, and global experts predict that there will be mineral shortages.

Nova Scotia has tremendous potential to produce critical minerals. We've mined many in the past and can do so again. This would create jobs for Nova Scotians and generate revenues for government to help pay for programs like health and education.

[1:15 p.m.]

Nova Scotians strongly support our industry. We released a poll a couple of weeks ago which shows 75 per cent agree that the mining and coring industry can play an important role in maintaining Canada's economic independence as President Trump threatens our economy and sovereignty. Nova Scotians know that we need to create jobs, become more self-reliant, and build a stronger province. The mining and coring industry is part of the solution. Seventy-six per cent of Nova Scotians support mining critical minerals like lithium, zinc, and copper which are essential to achieving climate goals. That is a remarkable 11 per cent increase in support year over year.

We are grateful to the government for recently repealing the Province's uranium ban. Uranium is a critical mineral because it is the key fuel for emissions-free nuclear power. Countries around the world, including Canada, have committed to tripling nuclear power in order to achieve climate goals. Repealing the ban sent an important message to the global mining industry that Nova Scotia wants the jobs and investment that mining creates. It also signaled that the government is committed to making policy and permitting decisions based on science and facts, not myths and misconceptions.

The next step the government must take is cutting red tape and permitting for the mineral sector while maintaining environmental standards. Fixing permitting is essential because it takes an average of 17 years to get from mineral deposit discovery to actual mining, according to the International Energy Agency - too slow to achieve climate goals. Permitting is a major bottleneck in the process. That is why jurisdictions across Canada and around the world are taking steps to expedite permitting while continuing to ensure the highest environmental standards are applied. Nova Scotia needs to catch up.

The government needs to restructure its permitting system for the mineral sector by putting one department in charge, as other provinces do. There are three main reasons for this. First, Nova Scotia's permitting system is widely seen as being the worst in Canada. This makes it much harder for us to attract investment in our mineral potential. Second, other provinces have a department of mines that is responsible for permitting and regulating the sector. They have one department that has the experts needed to efficiently and affectively regulate the industry, including, of course, protecting the environment. Third, most of the Government of Nova Scotia's employees who are experts in mining and minerals work in DNR's Geoscience and Mines branch. However, they have almost no role in permitting our sector. Instead, we are almost entirely regulated by people in other departments who are not experts in mining. That makes no sense, and it is the opposite of how other provinces do it.



Nova Scotia's structure creates uncertainty and confusion for project proponents. It often does the same for government officials who frequently work at cross purposes to each other and offer contradictory and ever-changing interpretations of permitting rules. We're not asking for regulatory oversight to be less stringent. Our concerns are with red tape, unclear requirements, and lengthening timelines. Our poll shows that 74 per cent of Nova Scotians support consolidating the mine permitting process within one department, as other provinces do; 72 per cent support setting a goal of issuing permits for new mining projects within one to two years.

The mining and quarrying industry employs about 3,000 Nova Scotians, mostly in rural areas. We are the highest-paying resource industry in the province with average total compensation of \$102,000 per year.

Critical minerals create a tremendous opportunity for Nova Scotia. We can create more jobs for Nova Scotians. We can generate more government revenues to help pay for programs like health and education. We can build a stronger, more self-reliant province as we face today's extraordinary challenges. However, we need government support to achieve this - in particular for the government to restructure its permitting system.

THE CHAIR: I recognize Mr. Mark Haywood, president and CEO of EDM Resources.

MARK HAYWOOD: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for inviting me to speak today. As you know, modern society depends on many natural resources from mining to make essential products such as steel, copper, aluminum, and many other things - products like zinc. We essentially rely on mining for virtually everything in daily life, from metals in our smartphones, to the steel and concrete in this building, to airplanes we travel on, to the cars we drive in, and, of course, the roads we drive on. Mining is essentially an essential tool today, not only in our community, but in our modern society.

By way of background, I'm a mining engineer. I have about 16 years building and operating mines around the world in Australia, Africa, Asia, U.S.A., and Canada. The balance of my time has been as CEO for exploration and mining companies in Canada, most of which have been listed on the stock exchanges. I like to think that I have some knowledge in this area of mining in Canada.

In our modern society, one of the particular metals we use is steel. Steel is used in construction, in buildings, roads and bridges, concrete, power lines, and power line towers. We use steel in automotive. We use it in electric vehicles. We depend on steel for most electric vehicle fabrication, even. Wind turbines, buildings, transformers to move electricity around our modern society, and of course, our transmission lines, also use steel.

We also use copper. Our modern society depends on copper - copper in wires, including electric vehicle motors, and wires for cabling. I've operated copper mines around

the world. I've made copper that goes into cables that are used in people's houses to transmit electricity. Without copper mines, we wouldn't have copper wires to conduct electricity. Copper is a critical mineral in Canada. It's also a critical mineral in Nova Scotia.

As you know, I currently manage the Scotia Mine, which is near the Stanfield Airport. It's a zinc mine, it's a lead mine, and it's a gypsum mine. It's all three of those products that we are planning on mining. Zinc is a critical mineral in Canada and also in Nova Scotia. Zinc is largely used to protect steel from corrosion, which is called galvanizing. Because of the massive demand for steel in our modern society, zinc is needed in large quantities and is deemed a critical mineral because of that. Zinc is an essential metal for our modern world. Zinc is used in galvanizing - as I mentioned - for steel, essentially coating steel to stop it from rusting. It's also used in die casting to make cars and machine parts. Brass and bronze has zinc in it. We use it for zinc batteries. We use it in solar cells and EV components. We use it in agriculture. We use it in human health, in nutrients. We also use it in chemicals to make rubber.

By example, a Nova Scotian wind turbine, which is typically about 5 megawatts of capacity, has about 30 tonnes of zinc in each one - in each of those towers, that's 30 tonnes, which is about 60 Ford F-150 trucks that that can carry. Sixty loads of zinc are in one tower. That's a lot of zinc that we need for an EV world.

Gypsum is also planned to be permitted and mined from the Scotia Mine. Gypsum is a soft material that's used in wallboard, drywall cement, and plaster of Paris. It's used in soil conditioning, fertilizer, and sidewalk chalk. Zinc is a strategic mineral in Nova Scotia.

Regarding the Scotia Mine, it's near the Stanfield Airport, and we are on the path to produce zinc, mainly, but also lead and gypsum. We are working hard with our team on site and with our First Nations partners and stakeholders to advance the restarting of this mine into commercial production as early as next year. We've received most of the major permits to go into production. We're working on the final authorizations with Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

To date, EDM has spent over \$50 million since it acquired the property in 2011. Once permitted, the company is going to inject over \$40 million into the Nova Scotia economy. That's as early as next year. We're going to create over 140 full-time jobs for Nova Scotians, which would be over a planned 14-year mine life. It's quite a long period of employment for people. We're going to establish businesses and service contracts with a wide range of support businesses in HRM, from mining - to help us mine - to transporting goods and services to cleaning. It's a big impact a small mine can have on our economy. Of course, the mine's going to produce zinc, lead, and gypsum, which means we pay royalties to Nova Scotia. Through taxes, we'll be paying federal taxes to the Canadian government.

As you can see, the development of our natural resources through mining is very important to our modern society. It's been a very challenging 10 years for EDM to identify property and do all the necessary things to work out whether a mine is viable, but at the same time, build strong relationships with our First Nations, with our community, and with our government. Take it from a CEO of a mining company that attracting investment for a mine in Nova Scotia has been very challenging.

It's very important that the Government of Nova Scotia do everything it can to make the province more attractive for investment. Cutting red tape and expediting permitting while maintaining strong environmental standards would be a major investment incentive. The current permitting and regulatory structure creates major uncertainty, confusion, and delays for projects. I think Sean has mentioned some of those. That's what we've definitely seen. Typically, companies run out of money and time before they're able to complete the permitting. You have a time frame that this needs to be done within.

I believe to implement an attractive critical minerals strategy and develop Nova Scotia's mineral resources, a restructuring of the permitting system would attract investment. You only have to look to other provinces, what they do, and how they do it to provide some guidance. Thank you for your attention.

THE CHAIR: I recognize Mr. John Wightman, managing director of the Goldfields Group of Companies.

JOHN WIGHTMAN: Thank you for the invitation to come here today to explain a little bit about the long process from discovery to mining. It is an expensive, time-consuming business. For instance, recently I had the privilege of being associated with a company called Moose River Resources. Moose River optioned a property near Middle Musquodoboit called the Touquoy deposit to Australians in 2003. We had held that property since 1996. That project finally went into production in 2017. It has now completed its operations and is in reclamation mode.

That gives you an idea of how long it takes to get to the pre-mining phase - the pre-construction phase of the mine - which started in 2015. About \$30 million was spent to get through the permitting, and then a \$270 million further was spent to put the mine in operation. It was a successful operation. It contributed greatly to the economy of this province. My estimate is that there were \$200 million accruing to the Province from income tax and HST payments. It was a big operation.

We have other opportunities. My group of companies, Goldfields Group, has the expiration licences for approximately half of the critical mineral deposits in Nova Scotia. That ranges from Sydney area - Frenchvale - with a graphite mine - a potential graphite mine. Can't get the horse before the cart on that one. It takes a while, but we're gradually defining that deposit - all the way to Yarmouth area, which is a property that is a tin, zinc,

copper, indium deposit. That's at a place called Dominique, about four kilometres east of the Yarmouth airport.

[1:30 p.m.]

Of course, our greatest project at the moment is the Brazil Lake lithium deposit. In 2022, we had a million tonnes defined. At the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto, we got a contact with an Australian company. They came in and spent about \$8 million in the next year and took that deposit from one million tonnes to 10 million tonnes. That is sort of the threshold. We now have enough resource that that is going to be a viable mine someday. Of course, that depends on many features, including the funds to get it through pre-feasibility and feasibility and then raise a massive amount of money - probably \$200 million - for construction and to put it into production.

I circulated earlier a copy of a one-pager critical minerals strategy that I hope will raise some questions from the members here today. I support strongly the position of the Mining Association of Nova Scotia with respect to the permitting process and the necessity of streamlining that. It took four to five years to get the Tourquoy mine at Moose River permitted. That's far too long.

In Canada, most of the mining investment activity takes place in either Vancouver or Toronto. Unfortunately, most of those people think that Canada ends to the east at Quebec City. It is very hard to get attention, but we are very fortunate in the Mineral Resources Development Fund that the Department of Natural Resources administers. They provide the opportunity for prospectors to go to that and a convention in Vancouver called AME Roundup. That gives us a chance for exposure. This year in particular, the fact that the Premier came to Toronto and stayed there for a couple of days and met a lot of people certainly raised a greater awareness of Nova Scotia.

I'm here today wearing two hats: one as the managing director of this Goldfields Group of Companies - there are about 10 or 12 companies in that group. They're all private companies. I'm also executive director of the Prospectors Association of Nova Scotia, and I would just like to give a shout-out to our newly elected president, Morgan Verge. Wave, Morgan. She was just elected last Wednesday as the president of that association. Practically all of the critical mineral deposits in Nova Scotia are found by prospectors. It's a very important aspect of the whole mining operation.

THE CHAIR: We're going to move to the question-and-answer part. Before we go, I first want to just say that when I introduced Mr. Kirby, I did not indicate that Mr. Kirby is the executive director of the Mining Association of Nova Scotia.

We're going to start - first I want to remind everyone that I have to call your name before the folks at Legislative TV turn your microphone on. That way, everything's recorded. Try to wait for me to recognize you, okay?

We'll start with the first round of questioning with the NDP caucus with 20 minutes.

MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: I'd like to return to Chief Young and hear a bit more about what your experience has been like in the last few years around the issue of the Critical Minerals Strategy and mining in Nova Scotia.

Deputy Minister Gatien referred to the creation of the list in 2022, the strategy in 2024, and then, of course, the surprise legislation that was brought forward by the government in 2025. Deputy Minister Gatien didn't refer to any Indigenous consultation with the Mi'kmaq or any constitutional consultation. Can you walk us through what the consultation with the Mi'kmaq community has been like to date?

THE CHAIR: Chief Young.

TAMARA YOUNG: I'm going to look to my technician, Patrick Butler, to answer that.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Butler.

PATRICK BUTLER: Thank you for the question, Lisa. It's been a bit rocky, I'll say. It's a bit inconsistent with the recent developments on the notifications of developments. Unfortunately, our office that coordinates and facilitates consultation on behalf of our member communities is finding out a lot of these updates - such as Section 26 of the Mineral Resources Act being utilized and Bill No. 6's introduction, as well as the change to the Critical Minerals Strategy with adding uranium - we're finding out about these developments through the news with no direct notification to our office.

We do have a great working group, I'll recognize, with Janice Zinck and her office called the mineral resource working group. It's a fantastic forum that allows us to have this working relationship with the Province. But unfortunately, we are learning about a lot of these decisions second-hand and not having that direct line of communication that we once had - maybe about a year ago, I'll say. So it has been very difficult trying to keep up with the changes and just trying to inform our leadership and be technical support for them as needed.

LISA LACHANCE: I'm wondering if you know why there's been such a change to a process that was working well. Do you think in the past year the government has been fulfilling its duty to consult?

PATRICK BUTLER: Even looking at the Critical Minerals Strategy, there are a lot of great commitments in there. Pillar Three focuses exclusively on the Mi'kmaq. Just looking at some of the language in there: "meaningful consultation with the Mi'kmaq of

Nova Scotia when it is contemplating decisions,” and “The strategy encourages collaboration and engagement with all interested parties” - as well as facilitating the participation of the Mi’kmaq in the mineral exploration sector. It certainly hasn’t seen that. We did find out about the RFP for the uranium sites through the news as well. It would have been nice to have a bit of a heads-up that these things are coming.

It’s definitely eroded. I do find there are resources that might have been available, let’s say, about a year ago that aren’t available anymore at this time.

LISA LACHANCE: I’m wondering if you’ve requested a meeting of the mineral working group to have a catch-up over what’s been happening over the past year. You mentioned the RFP that was issued for uranium sites. Did the department consult with you or anyone at the confederacy around what an appropriate plan for engagement in that process would be?

PATRICK BUTLER: No, we weren’t consulted on the changes to the list of critical minerals. There has been no discussion about that.

In terms of our mineral working group, we just got that back up and running. It’s great to have a new co-chair in Janice’s department. We’re working on that.

We have reached out to the Office of L’nu Affairs and our department contacts who are newly in place. Unfortunately, we’ve had no responses on some of those matters, particularly on Bill No. 6 and Section 26 of the Mineral Resources Act being used.

LISA LACHANCE: The RFPs that were issued for uranium exploration include a rubric. In that rubric, it’s actually quite possible for proponents to have very little experience working with Mi’kmaq and Indigenous groups.

I guess my question is for Deputy Minister Gatién. How will the department rectify this challenge and start fulfilling the government’s duty to consult?

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister Gatién.

KAREN GATIÉN: What I will say is that the previous witness’s comments notwithstanding, we certainly take our responsibilities for duty to consult very seriously beyond just the legal requirements. We actually do want to have a good, fulsome engagement with the Mi’kmaq and with the broader community over mining projects. I will take back some of the comments with respect to not receiving responses and try to get that clarified.

It will be project-by-project. I think it will be really important as we see projects come forward. It’s difficult right now for us to consult on something that doesn’t exist in terms of a concrete project in a particular area, but I think it will be really important to have

rigorous consultation and meaningful consultation as the projects get developed in early days. I take the Chief's comment. I think the earlier the better. I know we have a history in the province of having good equity partnerships on different kinds of projects. This should be no different. As we look forward in terms of what the possibilities are, we can certainly have that meaningful consultation and hold our developers to that standard.

LISA LACHANCE: With that being said, the Critical Minerals Strategy includes a whole pillar. I hear a commitment. I hear from your partners on the working group that it had been working well. What happened in the past year? Why did the consultation and communication and the duty to notify and consult stop?

KAREN GATIEN: I don't know that I would characterize it as stopping. I think the committee has a particular role and purpose. I think it was a government decision to go in a particular direction and create legislation. I don't know that it was necessarily "We're not going to do it" in this case. The direction has been very clear, and I think the Premier's comments have been clear that there will be meaningful and appropriate consultation on a project-by-project basis.

If you can indulge me, Janice had something to add to the last discussions.

THE CHAIR: Executive Director Zinck.

JANICE ZINCK: I just wanted to add a few points. We did do a formal consultation on the Critical Minerals Strategy and, as Mr. Butler has mentioned, we do have Pillar 3, which is focused on opportunities with the Mi'kmaq. Most recently, through that Critical Minerals Strategy, we've funded KMK to undertake a study on the economic opportunities for the Mi'kmaq. That draft report has been received, and we see all kinds of potential new work that could come out of that first project, that first report.

Like Mr. Butler has mentioned, we're very pleased to have the working group up and running again. There was no deliberate reason why it didn't. I think it was partially scheduling, and then things got missed, and we were on a regular rotation, but we are pleased to be back. Our last meeting was on March 31<sup>st</sup>, where we did talk about uranium, and we did talk about critical minerals and the Critical Minerals List being updated.

LISA LACHANCE: I guess I would contend that government decision-making and scheduling don't override the constitutional responsibility to consult the Mi'kmaw people. My question is for Chief Young: With this explanation of what's been going on, is that good enough? Do you think that's a reasonable explanation for what's happened, and what do you think should happen going forward?

CHIEF TAMARA YOUNG: I don't think that I can fully respond to that question just yet without speaking to the rest of the Assembly on what their thoughts are.

LISA LACHANCE: I'm just going to switch a little bit on focus. The RFPs that have been issued for uranium exploration are largely on private land. Are there Nova Scotians living on these sites and have you consulted with them prior to the RFP?

[1:45 p.m.]

JANICE ZINCK: Yes, the RFP areas are mainly private land. There is a small portion of Crown land in some of the areas. The private landowners are being notified by letter, and in those letters, we'll stipulate their rights and where they can gain additional information if needed.

It's a request for proposals. What happens in the request for proposals? As you know, they mentioned the rubric. If and when there is someone who is selected as the appropriate recipient, they will receive an exploration licence for one or the entire area. At that time, it does not in any way mean that it only allows the exploration licence holder the right to explore for minerals. It does not grant them access to the private land. They would need to still gain private land access if that was the case, if they decided to proceed.

I also will note that exploration does not necessarily take place in the whole area. It may be a very targeted small area where the exploration takes place.

LISA LACHANCE: I've been talking to a lot of people organizing in the various areas affected by the current RFP. For them, I'm going to ask a couple of questions. Can folks say no to exploration on their privately held land, and can folks say no to having mining on their properties?

JANICE ZINCK: Yes, they can say no. They have the right to their surface access. They can prescribe whether or not there will be access, whether it will be access under an agreement, and what types of compensation would be required if they were to grant access. That's typically what happens. Certainly, those who are in the exploration community, particularly John Wightman, could speak very much in detail about how the agreements would be in place if access were granted.

LISA LACHANCE: You talked about surface rights, yet we know that the department accessed Section 36 of the Mineral Resources Act in the past Winter to grant land to a lithium mining company against the wishes of the private landowner. Will the department be taking similar steps if a property owner says, "I'm not interested in having uranium exploration on my property," to use the Mining Resources Act or the new powers that were developed under Bill Nos. 1 and 24 in the Spring session that will override the property owner's wishes?

JANICE ZINCK: Just a point of clarification: The two parties that were involved in the Section 26 process had been in negotiation for over nine months. There were eight versions of an access agreement in place. The department, at that point when it received a



Section 26 request, came in to assist with providing some clarity around how access could be and how an agreement could be reached. It is a very rarely used clause in the Mineral Resources Act - only two or three times in the last number of decades. The current position of the minister is such that he would not likely - and I would say he probably would not enter in - I cannot speak for him, but what he has spoken to is that the two parties would need to have shown some willingness to come together in agreement. I think with confidence, I could say that for access for exploration, if a private citizen did not want to have access, they have the surface rights to their land.

THE CHAIR: MLA Leblanc - five minutes.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I just want to go back again to Chief Young for a moment and ask a couple of questions about hydraulic fracking. It's wonderful to have you here to ask questions in person. You've made it clear that the Assembly is opposed to fracking taking place on unceded and traditional territory. Can you tell the committee why you are deeply opposed to fracking?

TAMARA YOUNG: I'm going to defer to Patrick, who has worked on this file for years.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Butler.

PATRICK BUTLER: It's been such a rocky road. Looking back at Alton Gas, that was such a contentious project and so near some of our Mi'kmaw communities. The ban to fracking, I think, had a lot of really good scientific data behind it, a lot of public support, a lot of consultation with the Mi'kmaq leading up to that point. It's really nice to see those thorough processes being implemented with meaningful consultation and engagement with the Mi'kmaq.

Lifting the ban and introducing Bill No. 6 does undermine all of that work that was done for years, unfortunately. It can erode some of those relationships that our office and the chiefs have built over the years. Again, just the lack of notification and learning about these pieces through the media can be really frustrating for some of our leadership trying to make informed decisions and report back to their communities as well.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Since the ban was lifted, has the government looped in anyone from your office or from the Assembly into discussions on fracking?

PATRICK BUTLER: No, we have not had any formal engagement or letters, especially around hydraulic fracking. I'm not sure if pieces have been related to the chiefs directly, but our office, KMK - through our technical staff and the consultation efforts, we haven't received any correspondence.

Our chiefs did have one meeting with the Premier. It was a very short and very high-level meeting where we talked about a number of different items, one of which was hydraulic fracturing. It's been very light in terms of the communication on this piece.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I probably have a sense of what you'll say to this next question, but I'm going to ask it: What should the consultation look like moving forward with KMK and the Assembly and Mi'kmaq communities throughout the province?

PATRICK BUTLER: So far, we've heard a lot of chat about "We want to have a discussion" and "We want to open the door and have these research opportunities." I think that could have been done - not so much on a project-by-project basis, but maybe like an overall industry. It would have been very easy, I think, for a representative to contact the Assembly and reach out before Bill No. 6 was implemented and just see what the chiefs and the leadership think about it. It can be a bit frustrating, like I said, when we're learning these things through second-hand knowledge.

Jess, I don't know if there's anything else?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Ginsburg.

JESSICA GINSBURG: Just to add to what my colleague says in response to the comments about project-by-project consultation: If there's a true intention for collaboration and partnership, approaching our communities and our leadership by the time the project is already in development is way too late. That does not look like a genuine effort to be inclusive.

In the Government of Nova Scotia's own words: "the Government of Nova Scotia may wish to include the views and ideas of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia in the strategic planning of important areas of public policy," which I would certainly say this qualifies as.

THE CHAIR: MLA Leblanc, with 20 seconds.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Would you say that the lack of consultation could be deemed illegal or against the constitutional rights of the Mi'kmaq in this case?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Ginsburg, with six seconds.

JESSICA GINSBURG: Six seconds. I would say that has to be a case-by-case analysis, but it goes beyond just meeting the absolute minimum legal duty. It has to go beyond that.

THE CHAIR: Order. Now we're going to move on to questioning by the Liberal caucus.

MLA Rankin.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: My questions are also around process. As a caucus, we definitely support mining. We want to see this sector grow, but sometimes when fair process isn't followed, it can actually have the opposite impact in growing a sector and have a backlash that is a challenge to grow an industry.

First, with the Mi'kmaq, there's a duty to consult. My colleagues have asked about that. I just want some clarity around formal consultation by the provincial government. It was asked if there was consultation before the bill was presented in terms of removing the ban on fracking and uranium mining. I just want clarification that there was no formal consultation related to either, both before the ban was actually removed and then after the legislation was enacted.

We've heard the Premier's comments around this that removing the ban was about starting a conversation. One would expect, if you didn't consult at that point, then the consultation would start before exploration licences are sent out and treaty holders find out about it in the evening news, as they said. I just want clarity that there was, in fact, no formal consultation on either fracking or uranium mining with the Assembly.

PATRICK BUTLER: No, there's been no consultation on any of those pieces.

IAIN RANKIN: Deputy Minister Gatién, when were you first informed that the government intended to lift the bans on uranium and fracking?

KAREN GATIEN: I honestly cannot remember the date. What I will tell you is you know the process as well as I do of developing legislation. It would have been shortly after the election, I think.

IAIN RANKIN: After the election, it was decided to lift these bans. Was your department involved in any consultation with municipalities? We're hearing no on the Indigenous leaders, but was there any involvement in municipalities or did you advise the Premier that the consultation would be a wise choice before bans were removed?

KAREN GATIEN: There was not consultation by the department, no. When I say decision, I don't know that the decision was made shortly after the election; that's when I was informed. What I will say, though, is it's safe to say it's been a long-standing position of the department that we needed to look at uranium for lots of reasons. The ban meant that we couldn't even do research on it. It was a really all-encompassing ban, and there is significant need for us to do research, as we're hearing more and more about things like the increased need for radon testing. We honestly have very limited information in the department.

Had I been asked, I would 100 per cent have said yes, we should look at it for information, if for no other reason, to be honest. I think there are lots of really good reasons for the development of the mining of uranium as well. Consultation - any part of our recommendation would always include at some point. There has to be, under the duty to consult. We have to do Mi'kmaq consultation. We have to do community consultation. How and what that looks like we are still framing up.

[2:00 p.m.]

IAIN RANKIN: Yet most of the conversation today really hasn't talked about uranium. It's talked about all the other minerals that are listed on the Critical Minerals List. We talked about challenges around copper. We talked about opportunities around graphite. We talked about zinc and tin and all these other materials. Really, we're talking about this sector as a whole, but somehow, the public relations campaign has focused on one specific mineral and that is - well, fracking, too, but uranium mining. The justification is the huge economic benefits. Surely, if this was talked about before it was proposed, can the department provide the specific data that outlines the projected economic benefit that the Premier cites to make sure that this comes through?

KAREN GATIEN: Are you talking about for critical minerals broadly or just uranium? First of all, there's not the same public discourse on the other critical minerals - I agree with you - because they didn't have a ban on them.

IAIN RANKIN: The point is, I think, that the sector is asking for a number of things. I'll ask a question on those, because I think they're actually reasonable asks to move the whole sector forward. I think the public is getting drowned out by the challenges around trying to follow process and getting them engaged if we're going to start uranium mining. There are multi-billion-dollar figures that are thrown around and we've yet to see anything tabled in Estimates at any point during the Legislature. There was also a \$6 billion figure in terms of one lithium project - maybe that's the one referenced at Brazil Lake.

Has the department validated that \$6 billion figure? Is the department prepared to produce any tangible benefits for the committee to actually look at what the opportunity is?

THE CHAIR: Executive Director Zinck.

JANICE ZINCK: I think there is no doubt that there are tremendous opportunities, economic and otherwise - social benefits - regarding critical minerals. Each project, as noted, is different. Each project is at a different phase of development and as the phase of development advances, the clarity around the economic opportunity crystalizes. We have over 20 critical mineral projects in development in this province. Even just looking at those, again, on an estimate basis, we need to take into consideration a number of things. I'm sure

you're very aware of commodity price fluctuations. If I gave you a number today, it would be different than a number that would be given tomorrow.

We are doing the analysis. We are looking at the various projects. As they advance, again, those numbers will crystallize. Industry participants can tell you that it's very important and it's essential that they go through extremely detailed analysis in terms of the financial and bankable opportunity that's there. It's a necessity under federal security regulations that they file how much their projects are worth. That is based on science. It's based on data that's from the geological resources and from the metallurgical testing. All of this is public information that's accessible through a number of sites. Each project must do that as they advance, and as they advance, the level of detail that's required for them becomes more and more stringent and more information is required. Each one of these individuals could speak to that in depth.

IAIN RANKIN: The uranium deposits we have in the province - Saskatchewan is the other province that has success. They have high-grade uranium - upwards of 20 per cent in their ore. Does the department have data about the grade of uranium here in Nova Scotia?

JANICE ZINCK: Unfortunately, we have very little data on the uranium concentrations. What we know is that there was quite a bit of drilling and analysis that was done in the 1970s and early 1980s. For the past 40 years, as you know, neither the department nor industry has been able to do any analysis. All we have is some of that historic data - and not even all of it - to be able to quantify what the concentration of uranium is. We know there are those three hot spots in the province, but that's why both provincial and industry research is required.

IAIN RANKIN: In Ontario, they're moving through a bill called Bill No. 5, which actually reduces the impact of the Endangered Species Act to speed up some of the issues with mining. Is the Province bringing forward legislation similar to that, or any other legislation that would diminish the strength of the Endangered Species Act?

KAREN GATIEN: I have received no such direction at this time. I mentioned in my speaking notes about us trying to improve the permitting, which I would wholly agree with like our colleagues here. That's not the same thing, though. There are processes and red tape processes that we ourselves have sort of built up over time. But we, again, take the responsibility for the Endangered Species Act very seriously. That continues.

IAIN RANKIN: So there is an ask to reduce the process from four or five years down to two years? Is the department prepared to do that for the mining sector?

KAREN GATIEN: It hasn't been quantified in that way to me, but I think there are a lot of places where we have overlaps and duplication. We are certainly working to make

sure it's as streamlined as it possibly can be to move things along while still protecting the environment.

THE CHAIR: Order, please. I now move to questioning from the PC Party.

MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: This question is for the Department of Natural Resources. Could you just describe for everyone what the most important critical minerals that we have are, and how we decide what is a critical mineral?

THE CHAIR: Executive Director Zinck.

JANICE ZINCK: Currently, we have 20 critical minerals on our list. The list was developed by looking at four criteria. Those are the same four criteria we used in 2022: whether or not there's geological potential, whether or not it's something that's going to be required to reach our emission-reduction targets, whether or not there's a supply/demand risk there with that mineral, and finally, whether there's an opportunity for Nova Scotia.

At the same time, this year we put a lens on the geopolitical aspects and looked at a bit of a defence aspect as well. This is particularly in light of the most recent restrictions that China has placed on a number of critical minerals. They have restricted export of about seven different critical minerals. Because of that, we looked at those factors when we prepared our list this year.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: So they are minerals and they are critical. Thank you.

How are these critical minerals used in clean energy and other new technologies?

JANICE ZINCK: Critical minerals in general, and the ones we have on our list, are used in many different clean-energy applications, most notably in electric vehicles and batteries - things like lithium, graphite, cobalt. These are all used in electric-vehicle batteries. Then we have zinc, as mentioned, and manganese, that are also used in batteries but more for stationary batteries. We have a number of the critical minerals that are on our list that are used for solar. We have rare earth elements that are used for permanent magnets that go into electric vehicles and also go into wind turbines.

There's quite an array of critical minerals that go into these clean-energy applications, as well as the high-tech infrastructure that's required to support them, such as a lot of the technology that goes around those energy-efficient aspects. We also have our strategic minerals that go into looking at some of the infrastructure applications related to supporting those green critical mineral clean-energy applications.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: How do critical minerals differ from the new list of strategic minerals?

JANICE ZINCK: The critical minerals are really focused around those four criteria that I spoke of earlier. They really are related to energy transition, but also applications in defence and health care.

The strategic minerals list was put together because they were seen as economic drivers for the province or as minerals that were of other importance, such as potash for the agricultural industry. With the critical minerals list being more energy-transition driven, the strategic minerals list is more focused on economics and other applications.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: Could you talk a bit about the demand and the increasing demand for critical minerals, especially with regard to ethical sources?

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister Gatien.

KAREN GATIEN: I think Janice has already spoken about the increasing demand, whether it's our phones or our computers or wind turbines or solar panels. We do know that there are other locations in the world that have sources of critical minerals, but they are not - if you think of the Congo, where cobalt is sourced, they do not have the same health and safety standards. They certainly do not have the same environmental standards. I do think we have an ethical responsibility to make sure we're using all this material. We're not going to stop tomorrow, using our cell phones or our phones - computers, I should say - as much as it would be nice on some days. How can we make sure that what we're putting into them is ethically sourced in the same way that we look at our local food supply and things like that?

I do think that in addition to the economic opportunity for Nova Scotia in terms of the development of critical minerals, we also know we can ensure a safe supply again. We know where the critical minerals are coming from if we're able to do that. We can also support initiatives across the country, as well, by providing our critical mineral supply to other development that happens.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: We've already heard that some private landowners are being notified about potential exploration. There are three sites selected. They're on privately owned land. For a landowner, what does that exploration look like?

JANICE ZINCK: If you think about exploration, it's really about figuring out a puzzle, in a way. It's easy to see what's on the surface of the Earth, but it's very difficult to see what's underneath it. Exploration is about finding out what's under the Earth. Different techniques are used - some as simple as going on the land to grab a sample, take the rock back and analyze it. There are other techniques, such as just picking up soil and analyzing that. Our other non-disturbance techniques like flying over the land by sending

signals down to the Earth help to identify where prospective areas of a known mineral might be. This is called geophysics. It's usually done by drones or sometimes by aircraft or helicopter. There's no disturbance to the landowners or to the surface.

[2:15 p.m.]

More disturbance activities or things that we're more aware of are things like drilling. When you drill a hole, it's like putting a straw down to collect a sample and taking it out which you can then look at or send for analysis. It's important to keep in mind that the size of the hole that the drill core has taken from is smaller than a well water hole. We're not talking about large, invasive disturbances. We're talking about something that a drill rig would go on and take a sample or two, or could be more than that - very strategically located.

When working with a private landowner, an exploration company would be in conversation to set forward an agreement, which would lay out where and when sampling could take place, what compensation would be required, what kind of remediations - the holes and disturbance activities need to be remediated - what kind of security would be required financially for doing reclamation. All of these things would be put in place. Basically, it would tell the landowner, in a way, what they're sitting on. If you're sitting on a hot spot for uranium, I would think that you would want to know that, particularly for - as noted by Deputy Minister Gatien - things like radon and even well water contamination that may occur naturally. People need to know the kind of geology underneath their feet. That's what exploration tells us - what the geology is under our feet.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: That's a very excellent answer. You kind of answered my next question, but I'd like to ask it specifically just so you can have an opportunity to give us some more information, especially where we're concerned with landowners. What can they negotiate with a company that's looking for access to their private land?

JANICE ZINCK: I'll just elaborate a bit on my previous answer. In working with the landowner, an exploration company, or individual, or geologist would negotiate a land access agreement. In that land access agreement can be a number of things. It can be where and when the company can go to do exploration. It can be to scan the specific compensation required to access the land, to drill a hole, to fly over their land. It could be a range of thing - the remediation that's required sometimes. Again, my colleagues could speak to this in depth. It could even be building a road for the landowner's purpose. It could be a number of things. Each agreement is a private arrangement, but they all would require that the company operating would fulfill all responsibilities and meet all their regulatory requirements under provincial, municipal, and federal responsibilities. It would lay out, again, the reclamation requirements in order to leave the land back to its original condition.

THE CHAIR: MLA White.



JOHN WHITE: In the department's opening remarks, you mentioned \$500,000 in this year's budget along with an agreement with the federal government for geoscience. I'm wondering if you can help us understand a little more about that. What do the projects and research look like? What do you hope to learn from it?

THE CHAIR: Executive Director Zinck.

JANICE ZINCK: We're very pleased to be able to receive the additional \$500,000 in this year's budget to undertake research for critical minerals. As you can anticipate, it's a large field, and we have a lot of work planned this year. That's been updated in the action plan presented in the Critical Minerals Strategy that's now online if anyone would like to look at it.

A number of things that we'll be working on this year include: creating some education materials for critical minerals so that we can improve the mineral literacy within the province; holding training sessions for industry and interested parties on mining and exploration, but also looking at some of the geoscience work, which is putting together a Nova Scotian critical minerals atlas; looking at establishing a new critical minerals project facilitator within the department to help guide projects; undertaking market assessments, supply chain work, and criticality assessments; looking at doing a couple of prospectivity maps for the province to better demonstrate and showcase where critical minerals are in the province. This type of geoscience work is extremely important to the industry to help allow them to better target their research.

We're doing some specific work for the federal government on graphite, and we're doing some additional work in partnership with our federal government counterparts on things like looking at critical minerals in secondary sources - more of a circular economy approach - if there are critical minerals in some of the mining waste that we may have in the province. There's an array of different projects that we're undertaking. For the sake of brevity, I won't go into every single one but thank you for the question.

JOHN WHITE: The value chain is an interesting topic to me. The Critical Minerals Strategy has six pillars to advance the development of a critical mineral value chain. Just wondering if you can help us understand a little more about that and explain more about how we're building that value chain in Nova Scotia.

JANICE ZINCK: Like you, I too am very excited by value chain opportunities within the province. I think that as some of my colleagues around the table have already spoken to the opportunity for critical minerals, we can see that we have the resources in the ground within the province. At the same time, we also have a lot of advanced technology being developed in areas such as semiconductors and batteries. It's about how we connect those pieces together. By working with our counterparts and partners, not only in industry but with our Mi'kmaw partners, we can work to develop supply chains and

value chains within the province. The name itself - value chain - I think demonstrates that as we move along that supply chain or value chain, the value increases.

If you take a resource out of the ground and then you upgrade it into what could be considered a chemical or could go into a battery, when you produce the battery and the battery can go into an EV vehicle, each step along that value chain increases value, increases the number of jobs, increases the revenue. This is what we're looking at: a holistic approach, not simply looking at extracting and shipping. We're looking at how we can bring the most value to the province from its critical minerals.

JOHN WHITE: That is the exciting part to me, because the potential is just blowing up so much at that point. It's really exciting to me.

We know, historically, that there are some mine sites that were contaminated, and I know you're working to address those. They come from a time with no regulations, and the Environment Act didn't exist at that time. You won't see that kind of contamination today. What can you tell us about how modern-day mining operates - the regulations to protect people and the environment and to reclaim the land after the mine has closed?

JANICE ZINCK: Nova Scotia has a long history with mining, some probably four centuries. A lot has changed in that time, even in the last number of decades. We can see so much in terms of regulations that have come into place. We didn't have the Environment Act previously, the way in which modern mining not only has approaches that contain waste that didn't happen in the past, that treat water that didn't happen in the past, that utilizes technology that minimized the use of water and reagents, but also in the way that we have the regulations in place to have strict environmental provisions in place so that we protect and safeguard the environment. Nova Scotia has one of the best records in terms of safeguarding the environment.

Those historic wastes and those historic mines that happened in the past did bring jobs and revenue to the province. We've learned a lot. The industry has learned a lot in its decades, so things have changed considerably. Companies cannot start a mining operation until they post a financial assurance bond. They also need a closure and reclamation plan. All of these things need to happen before even a shovel goes in the ground. So much has changed.

THE CHAIR: MLA Bowlby.

DAVID BOWLBY: The mining opportunities for Nova Scotians are wonderful. Youth who are in schools at colleges in geographical sciences in Annapolis are prepared to go to work. What are the opportunities for Mi'kmaw participation in social and economic development, and what kinds of conversations and actions are happening toward this?

THE CHAIR: I'm wondering if somebody from the Mining Association should answer that. Would you like to take that, Mr. Kirby?

SEAN KIRBY: Certainly. Our industry employs about 3,000 Nova Scotians. We're the highest-paying resource industry in the province, with average total compensation of \$102,000 a year. We want to grow. We know we have potential to do a lot more, to create a lot more jobs for Nova Scotians, create more opportunity for people in the province. We love it when our young people can stay here rather than having to move away. We love it when we can bring people back home to Nova Scotia from out West, or up North, or wherever else they may have to go in order to get work.

As we hopefully can take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity presented by critical minerals, we're going to need to grow our labour force. That, to me, includes all Nova Scotians and certainly Mi'kmaq and everybody else. That's extremely important. A rising tide lifts all boats, and that's a focus that we all have. Certainly, we want all Nova Scotians to benefit and to participate, and it's our job as an industry to do everything we can to reach out to share information about our industry so that Nova Scotians understand how we work, why we're important, how we take care of the environment, and see us as an attractive place to work.

DAVID BOWLBY: Mr. Kirby, could you expand on the critical minerals opportunity in Nova Scotia? What steps can the Province take to fully capitalize on this?

SEAN KIRBY: Thank you. I'm passionate about it, so I jumped in.

Look, the extraordinary opportunity that we face as a province - and really, that the global mining industry faces - as a result of the ambitious goals being set by jurisdictions around the world to achieve very ambitious climate goals creates an extraordinary opportunity for a province like Nova Scotia. We have mined many critical minerals in the past. We have the potential to do so again. It is our hope that Mark's mine will be the first new critical minerals mine to get into production - hopefully even, as he said, next year, potentially.

This is an incredible opportunity. At the same time, it's an extraordinary challenge. Global experts are virtually united in saying that there will likely be mineral shortages globally as a result of the need to provide the sheer quantity of critical minerals necessary. For example, the International Energy Agency says that we need about 50 new lithium mines by 2030. That's an utterly extraordinary challenge in an industry that has an average 17-year timeline from mineral deposit discovery through to actually extracting. It may be, frankly, an impossible goal, but clearly one that we need to do everything we can to try to achieve. The International Energy Agency estimates that we need about 238 new mines globally for a wide range of minerals. We want to be mining as much of that in this province as we can, creating jobs for Nova Scotians and generating revenues that help pay for things like health and education.

This is really an extraordinary period in our history in terms of the global effort to try to achieve climate goals like net zero and the sheer quantity of minerals needed to do it. Our focus is: Let's do everything we can to take advantage of that. As I said earlier, the provincial government repealing the uranium ban is a really important first step that, first of all and most obviously, allows us to explore for uranium and see whether we have economically viable deposits. But even, in some ways, more importantly than that, it sends a signal to the global mining industry that Nova Scotia wants the jobs and investment that mining creates. We believe that's going to benefit the industry across all minerals, not just uranium. There are so many others that we have in this province that we can mine and contribute to global supply, and at the same time, help build a stronger, more self-reliant province and a stronger economy.

It's very exciting. It's a really extraordinary time. It's really important to us that the provincial government continue to work with us. Repealing the uranium ban was a really fantastic first step. The next one is to restructure our permitting. We cannot be spending year after year after year in permitting and just having it be slow and inefficient. We all agree on the absolute necessity to fully protect the environment. We are not asking that environmental regulation be watered down in any way at all. We're saying it needs to be efficient. We need to go from spending years and years in permitting to get it down to something like one or two years.

The International Energy Agency recommends to jurisdictions around the world that they reduce permitting to about one year - while, of course, maintaining environmental protections. The IEA says that governments need to adopt a wartime mentality if we're going to try to achieve climate goals. We need to make extraordinary efforts here to try to do it. The Government of Nova Scotia has been a terrific partner. We look forward to working with them more on this really extraordinary challenge and fantastic opportunity for the province.

THE CHAIR: MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: This question is for Chief Young. I'd like to give you an opportunity to describe the priorities of the Mi'kmaq with respect to the critical minerals.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Butler.

PATRICK BUTLER: I think working with the right partner is going to be very important, and just ensuring that the Mi'kmaq are meaningfully involved at the earliest opportunity.

There are certain companies that are great to deal with. I look to NexGold in Goldboro. They've developed a great benefits agreement. It isn't exactly critical minerals, but I think it sets a great example about working collaboratively and early with the Mi'kmaq. That was a process that took five years to get to where we are. It shows, I think,

that the Mi'kmaq and our leadership aren't opposed to the industry and opposed to the mining sector. It's just making sure that they're involved meaningfully and at the earliest opportunity.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: MLA McGowan.

BRAD MCGOWAN: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome. Thank you for your individual expertise in this really important and informative conversation. I do have a couple of questions for our industry witnesses. I'll start with Mr. Haywood, if I could. What is the expected scale and life of a mine if successful, and is there an opportunity for expansion?

MARK HAYWOOD: I've worked all over the world running mines and building mines. One of the biggest things I see is the opportunity to put back into the community and develop employment in the community. Often, these mines keep on going. They keep on going, and they keep on adding life to the mine and creating jobs through training, apprentices, and things like that. The Scotia Mine is starting off to be initially five to seven years. With our expected economic improvement for the project, that's expected to go up to at least 14 years in the second stage. For some of that, we need additional authorizations and permitting. One of the reasons why we're here today is we need to make sure that the process continues and does so in a way that can help the community and can help the province.

To answer your question: Mines generally go on for a long period of time, and they employ a lot of people directly - with the Scotia Mine, at least 140 people to start off. Indirectly, you have millions of dollars being poured into the community for jobs that are related to the operation. That can be a lot more than the actual job at the mine. Indirect transport - I've been working with our Mi'kmaw partners to provide a bus service, for example, for employees to the mine - that's a long-term contract. Cleaning, jobs, and apprenticeships: All these things happen around a mining operation.

Because our mine is near the airport, I welcome visitors to come out and we'll do a tour of the operation to see that this is here, it's been here for a long time, and it's been overlooked. It shouldn't be overlooked because this is considerable revenue to the province in terms of royalties. It's jobs for our young people for a long time. It's jobs that are going to make a difference to their lives that they don't have to fly to Labrador for. They don't have to go to the oil patch. They can be trained, and they can work and contribute to a life in Nova Scotia.

BRAD MCGOWAN: My next question is either for Mr. Wightman or Mr. Haywood, whoever feels best positioned to answer it. How do the recent announcements

and subsequent actions related to natural resource development help to attract investment to the province and support your projects?

JOHN WIGHTMAN: I mentioned in my earlier statement the fact that the Premier had attended the Prospectors and Developers Conference. That certainly gave a much higher profile to Nova Scotia and the projects herein. I would like to also add that in our discussions with respect to the economic impact of mines, the lithium project that we have in Yarmouth County, I initially met with the Acadian band and said, "We're here; we're doing business; we hope to have a mine." I'm in contact with them. I've also had phone calls with Mr. Butler in the past.

Our mine, at the moment - I mentioned that we had met a threshold, the threshold being 10 million tonnes. That gives us a mine life of 10 years. Also, on our property, we see the potential for another 15 million to 20 million tonnes. We've only drilled a small portion of our mineral claims there. It could be a 20- or 30-year mine. One of the big things about that mine is that we're mining an ore body called pegmatite. Pegmatite is a highly fractionated granite with all the juices - the good juices - coming to the top. Not only do we have lithium, but we have tantalum . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. I'm sorry. The time for questioning by the PC Party has expired. We'll move on the NDP.

MLA Lachance, please.

LISA LACHANCE: I only have a short amount of time, so I'm going to be quick. Certainly, we're also really interested in what the rural development opportunities are from this work. People want jobs, and people want jobs in their communities. It hasn't been clear to me how we've really quantified what the opportunity is. I've asked the minister this before in Estimates. There have been job numbers bandied about - \$100,000-a-year jobs and that sort of thing - but we need to be clear with Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians need to know what that really means for their communities.

I'm wondering, Deputy Minister Gatien, if you can provide a clear breakdown on the jobs you expect to be created in the province. With the Critical Minerals Strategy, with Bill No. 6, what new jobs are there this fiscal year, next fiscal year? How many detailed data or projections do you have about the actual number of jobs that Nova Scotians will be able to get through what's coming up?

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister Gatien with one minute.

KAREN GATIEN: One minute. We don't have that kind of detail at this point. What we do know is based on previous mines about these are the kinds of jobs, whether it's a mining engineer, maybe equipment operators, et cetera, and this is what it would take. As we develop the projects, though, that will be part of the calculation that we will make.

Janice has already spoken a bit about - and I think I said it in my opening remarks - that there are also revenue and jobs just in the simple exploration. Prospectors are out looking at what might even be there in the first stage and the possibility for them to earn some funding to do that work.

As things go, we're also working with our colleagues in other departments around what the workforce development plans are that we need to put in place to make sure that all Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaw Nova Scotians, people living in rural communities, maybe people who want to retrain for new fields . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. MLA Rankin with one minute.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I actually really like the idea of one department focusing on permitting. I think we were close to that when we had the Department of Energy and Mines in 2018. Just wondering if there have been discussions with government, because I think it's a good idea. You could even move some specific staff from the Department of Environment and Climate Change. I just thought you might answer that.

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister Gatien.

KAREN GATIEN: Not at this point. I know it's certainly been raised with the government. What I will say is that there's a lot of very significant activity happening amongst primarily the three: LSI, Environment and Climate Change, and our department, Natural Resources, to break down silos and make sure that we're working as efficiently and smoothly as possible.

THE CHAIR: MLA Rankin with 20 seconds.

IAIN RANKIN: I want to thank all the witnesses for coming today. I really appreciate your time.

THE CHAIR: The PC Party with three minutes. MLA McGowan.

BRAD MCGOWAN: My next question is also for our industry guests, whoever of the three feels comfortable answering. How is the industry addressing growing need for education and public awareness about the importance, processes, and impacts of critical mineral exploration and mining, particularly among our youth and our local communities?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Kirby.

SEAN KIRBY: One of the biggest challenges that we face as an industry is misconceptions about it that, as a general rule, are rooted in the distant past. We can certainly agree that things like environmental and safety standards in prior generations were nowhere near what they ought to have been, and certainly they're nothing like what

they are today. We're a very sophisticated, modern, high-tech, science-based business that takes excellent care of the environment.

As an industry association, we spend a huge amount of our time trying to offer that educational information to people, providing factual, science-based information to Nova Scotians so they can understand the industry, how we work, how we take care of the environment, that our safety record in the modern era is so different from what it was historically, all those kinds of things. We do, for example, social media posts 365 days a year to help people understand that.

We do all kinds of things to try to offer that education to people. It is so important to our social licence that Nova Scotians understand the industry and how they benefit from it. Most people don't know that their phone contains dozens of minerals and metals from all over the world and the extraordinary complexity of supply chains that make something like that possible. We do everything we can to try to educate them about that. Again, it's important to our social licence, and we also just want people to understand it.

We don't, for the most part, interact with consumers because we don't generally sell a finished product to most people. It is a challenge for us sometimes to offer that educational information to people, but we do everything we can to try to do it. It's so important.

THE CHAIR: MLA Bowlby with one minute and 10 seconds.

DAVID BOWLBY: Mr. Haywood, could you discuss the importance specifically of the four recent additions to the critical minerals list, please?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Haywood.

MARK HAYWOOD: I see the Critical Minerals List as obviously growing with the relations between the U.S. and Canada. With a growing list, I believe the reliance has to be changed somewhat. Canada has to be more reliant. Nova Scotia has to be more reliant. I think there's a lot of mineralization in Nova Scotia that can, with our partners, work these minerals to become mines and therefore become . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. Thank you all very much. The time for questioning has expired. We've got 10 minutes for closing comments.

Chief Young.

TAMARA YOUNG: Thank you to the Chair and committee for the opportunity to allow me and my technicians to speak to you on behalf of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs. We have spoken today not only about the challenges we continue to face



but also about the opportunities that can lie ahead if we are committed to a relationship rooted in mutual respect, transparency, and true collaboration.

The development of Nova Scotia's Critical Minerals Strategy can be a turning point, but for it to succeed, the Mi'kmaq must be fully and fairly included - not after laws are passed, policies are finalized, and decisions are already made, but at the very beginning, when ideas are being shaped and considered.

When it comes to the duty to consult, we have clearly outlined our expectations for early, meaningful consultation; proper funding to support our participation; and the need to revisit and update existing tools like the Proponents' Guide. There should be transparency and predictability regarding what decisions trigger the duty to consult and whether procedural aspects of consultation are being delegated to proponents. There should also be consistent and real consequences for proponents not meeting such expectations.

These aren't just ideas or suggestions. They are real necessary steps to help us move forward together in a respectful and meaningful way.

We have also emphasized the importance of economic benefits for communities as rights holders of the lands and resources. These benefits may take the form of resource revenue sharing agreements and stronger commitments from proponents to work directly with rights holders. Proponents should be expected to engage early and often and be prepared to share a range of benefits with impacted communities, both financial and work-related. There are great examples of this already under way in other jurisdictions, and there is no reason why Nova Scotia can't do the same or better.

As we noted, there are positive signs in Pillar Three of the strategy highlighting the potential for collaboration and capacity-building. Let's ensure that those commitments are not just words on paper but are backed by real action. We're not against ethical and environmentally protective development. However, we will not support any approvals process that treats our constitutional rights as an afterthought.

We remain ready and willing to work together to build a better path forward - one that benefits everyone now and for future generations. Wela'lioq. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister Gatien.

KAREN GATIEN: I appreciate the thoughtful questions and certainly want to say thank you to the chief and her colleagues, as well as my mining industry colleagues. A huge thank you to Janice - she was a gift to the department when we recruited her back to Nova Scotia.

I do want to thank you all for your time and your questions. It makes all of our processes better to hear the concerns and the questions. Thank you very much for your time.

[2:45 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: Mr. Kirby.

SEAN KIRBY: Again, our thanks to the committee for having us here today. We really appreciate it. I really hope that our passion and excitement about the opportunities that we have here in Nova Scotia have come across. We really do have the potential to create a lot of jobs and opportunity in this province through critical minerals and growing our industry. It is essential that we get permitting fixed. Every other province in the country is seen as having a better permitting system than us. They have one department that's in charge, which helps to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulation, and they have the experts whom they employ in government focused on regulating its sector, all of which, strangely, is not how it works here in Nova Scotia. We hope the government will consider very seriously restructuring the permitting system for the mineral sector.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Haywood.

MARK HAYWOOD: My great-grandfather was the mine manager of the largest copper, lead, and zinc mine in Australia at the time. Mining built Australia. Mining is the backbone of Australia. It's my view, I think with my colleagues here, that mining can be the same thing for Nova Scotia. Mining can build a great Nova Scotia, and you have a wonderful opportunity ahead of you.

Thank you again for your time. I appreciate the invitation.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wightman.

JOHN WIGHTMAN: It's been a great pleasure to be here today to hear the comments of the various MLAs. I stress that there's much more to be said, and I would welcome any direct communication with me or the Nova Scotia Prospectors Association to tell you how it works.

THE CHAIR: I thank everyone very much. We're going to take a brief three-minute recess and then move on to committee business. Thank you.

[2:47 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[2:50 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Order. I'd like to call this committee back to order. Folks can stay or leave, but we are going to carry on. We're moving to discussions. The first discussion we have here is: "The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment requested to appear before the Committee on May 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss the impacts of uranium mining in dense and small areas." I think everybody has received a copy of that letter.

Is there any discussion on this matter?

MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'll just say, it's clear from the number of people whom we had at today's meeting that I don't think we could have added another witness, which is unfortunate. Maybe it's something to think about. This was a pretty focused discussion, but I would love to hear from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. Maybe we can look at inviting them at a future time or putting them on the list for a future topic. I do think that we wouldn't have heard enough from them today, because there were so many witnesses. Just want to put that on the record.

THE CHAIR: I would agree. I guess I'm looking for a motion. I think I need a motion that we would entertain that at a future topic setting.

MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: This is a request that came from them.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: Maybe we don't need a motion, but maybe we just need to be mindful to invite them for a similar topic at a future date.

THE CHAIR: That's cool with me. We're just going to leave it as it is. We've had those requests before.

"The Department of Natural Resources contacted the clerk to inform the Committee that the Department of Energy would be better suited to speak to the topic 'The Development of Nova Scotia Power Battery Plants.' The proposing caucus should move to make that change to the topic's witness list."

Go ahead, MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: As you stated, the topic is about battery power. The Department of Natural Resources is on the list, and it's more appropriate for the Department of Energy to be present for those questions. I'll make a motion now.

I move to amend the witness list for the third PC topic, the Development of Nova Scotia Power Battery Plants, by removing the Department of Natural Resources and adding the Department of Energy.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion? Go with the question?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Our next meeting falls on June 24<sup>th</sup>, and we have decided several times before that we're not going to hold a meeting of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee in the week that the schools are closing. It gives our MLAs an opportunity to be at all the different school closings they have. June 24<sup>th</sup> is not there. Is there a desire to change the meeting date? Are there any date suggestions? The clerk has offered Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup> as an option for consideration. I'm just throwing that out there. I know I'm not available on June 19<sup>th</sup>. What are your wishes on that? Will we just cancel that meeting and move on to the next available date?

MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: If we don't hold that meeting, will that leave us with sufficient meetings to cover the topics that we've selected?

THE CHAIR: We have plenty of available dates, and we don't have anybody booked for that particular meeting anyway. That's what the clerk tells me.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: I guess we need a motion to remove that date. We just agree?

THE CHAIR: I don't think we do. We just stay with the status quo. Is that correct? (Interruption) If we have unanimous consent, we don't need to have a motion. We remain status quo.

I don't know that I can give a date for the next meeting, but the clerk will get back to us on that. The topic will be determined and the witnesses. We look forward to hearing from the clerk at the earliest convenience.

With that, I adjourn this meeting - three minutes early. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 2:56 p.m.]