

## URANIUM? LEAVE IT IN THE GROUND

### A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON A LOCAL FIGHT

By Marion Moore

I listened with interest last October at the Council of Canadians' annual general meeting in Kelowna, British Columbia, as members from British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario discussed their struggles with uranium mining issues in their provinces. We were lucky in Nova Scotia. With a moratorium on uranium mining (at the time, we were the only province with one), it seemed we had achieved something significant in recognizing this was not what we wanted for our communities.

Unfortunately I was wrong to be so complacent about our situation in Nova Scotia. Our moratorium was at best very tenuous, especially when facing the pressure of market forces. As the price of uranium on the world market began to rise, at least one mining company began to pursue this province as a viable source of uranium. It wasn't long before our provincial government, seduced by the promise of an economic boom for Nova Scotia, suggested lifting the moratorium.

I decided I needed to get involved. I began by educating myself about uranium mining, learning that it poses serious dangers to the environment, to people's health, and indeed to the planet that far outweigh any good it can do. The mining process poses unacceptable risks – unacceptable to our land and waterways and unacceptable to our people. This is not the right path for Nova Scotia.

Just before the end of the year, new information surfaced. We learned that despite the moratorium, a mining company called Tripple Uranium Resources



Council of Canadians' board member Marion Moore shows a bumper sticker with the 25 year-old campaign slogan "Uranium: Leave it in the ground!" which is still being used in the fight to ban uranium mining in Nova Scotia today.

Inc. was actively exploring Atlantic Canada, including an area in Nova Scotia between Windsor and Chester that is known to be rich in uranium.

The South Shore chapter of the Council of Canadians quickly organized a public meeting. Most of us had not been active in the work done by citizens' groups 25 years ago that helped establish the current moratorium. We contacted Rudy Haase, a Council of Canadians member who was chair of "Citizens Against Uranium Mining" in the 1980s, for advice. He went into his basement and found material from that campaign, including a stack of bumper stickers that read "Uranium? Leave it in the ground."

About 120 people attended that first public meeting on a stormy January night. It was evident that not one person in the room believed uranium mining would be a good idea for our province. The risks to health and the environment were cited as clear, fact-supported reasons to continue the moratorium. It was also emphasized that any uranium mined in Nova Scotia would

inevitably be sold to countries that would use it to make nuclear weapons.

Since that initial meeting, other groups around the province began to organize. We have formed both local and provincial coalitions, started a letter-writing campaign, contacted our local papers, met with our provincial MLAs, and held other public meetings and film screenings. We have produced postcards, petitions, fact sheets, brochures and blogs, and have arranged for three municipalities to pass resolutions calling on the Nova Scotia government to bring in a legislated ban on uranium mining. We have also participated in the provincial government's Voluntary Planning Process on Natural Resources, with strong submissions opposing uranium mining.

Yet a very powerful campaign by the nuclear energy industry continues to suggest that uranium (and nuclear) is a "green" energy and one way to fight climate change. Last fall our Minister of the Environment said in the Legislature: "The government has an open mind on uranium mining and is trying to think of creative ways if we're going to fight climate change." The Minister ignores the fact that research has proven that nuclear energy is green only if the massive carbon debt of uranium mining, reactor construction (and decommissioning) and waste management is ignored.

Canada's deeper integration with the United States through the Security and Prosperity Partnership has accelerated this push towards nuclear energy. We must resist any further notion that uranium mining can be beneficial to Canada, and that nuclear energy can be considered "green energy."

As I drive around the province I am always encouraged in the validity of this fight when I spot cars with those 25-year-old bumper stickers: "Uranium? Leave it in the ground."

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