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Is history repeating itself?

Uranium debate looms large again

by **Nadine Armstrong/Hants Journal**

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By Nadine Armstrong

The Hants Journal/NovaNewsNow.com

In the early 1980s, **Nova** Scotians lobbied the government to put an end to **uranium** mining and exploration in **Nova Scotia** and, for a time, they were successful. A 1982 **moratorium** banned the practice in **Nova Scotia**, but now, 26 years, later the government may be questioning its application.

The debate ignited when privately owned Tripple **Uranium** Resources Ltd. merged with a publicly owned, junior exploration company Capella. Tripple opened its first **Nova Scotia** office in February 2007 and obtained a mineral exploration license from the province of **Nova Scotia**.

However, having a company name with **uranium** in it was enough to make at least one local environmental group sit up and take notice.

Gillian Thomas, a university professor at St. Mary's University in Halifax and CAPE (Citizens Action to Protect the Environment) member, was one of many who fought to see the Kid Creek **uranium** mine in Millet Brook, Hants County, shut down at the time of the **moratorium**.

That mine is now a closed area, however, Capella holds claims to over 60,000 hectares in and around central **Nova Scotia** bordering on Millet Brook. Thomas fears that even exploration in that **uranium**-rich area is an indication that Capella may be looking for more than they've bargained.

"They'll tell you the **moratorium** is still in force and general licenses have been granted, but my impression is that

companies aren't releasing their information," Thomas said.

She said the government isn't enforcing exploration guidelines and the onus is on individual companies to comply. "There's nothing legally requiring them to release their findings. Who's monitoring this?" she asked.

Not looking for **uranium**

However, Tripple president and Capella vice-president and operations manager Rob Krienke says it's a moot point because the company isn't looking for **uranium** in the province. Tripple does mine **uranium**, he said, but not in **Nova Scotia**.

"Millet Brook is not a **uranium** target," he said. "Why would we look for **uranium** when there's a **moratorium**? It doesn't make sense."

Kreinke said if they do come across **uranium**, they would abide by the regulations. "We're a public company responsible to our shareholders, and comply with all regulations."

The company announced in November that Capella "will make every effort to expedite the release of the assay results to the public as soon as the company receives such information from the testing facility."

Their most recent prospecting mission in Wentworth was for IOCG-Iron, ore, copper and gold, which Krienke says the **Nova Scotia** government has encouraged them to explore.

However, with the price of **uranium** skyrocketing, any discussion between governments and Tripple **Uranium** leads some like Thomas to wonder if the ban is secure.

Looked at differently: Morse

Natural Resources Minister David Morse doesn't deny there have been discussions around lifting the ban, but so far that's all they are - discussions.

"We've been getting a lot of communication from people on both sides of the **moratorium**," he said. And because over 25 years has passed since the ban was put in place, Morse said it's now being looked at from a different angle.

"Science suggests that it's a different day and society is looking for new ways of powering our economy. If we get swamped with interest and they can back it up with science, we're obligated to listen," he said.

Morse told The Hants Journal that in 2006 **Nova Scotia** took home \$8 million from exploration, which he said is a tidy sum, but on the other hand Newfoundland and Labrador was looking at a figure in and around \$65 million in **uranium** exploration alone.

"We're the anomaly," Morse said. "It may be time to step back and see if **Nova** Scotians are still comfortable with the **moratorium**."

He said France is considered one of the 'greenest' nations, "yet they heavily depend on nuclear energy, energy that comes from **uranium**."

No one has stated that Capella is the instigator of these discussions and although they claim to have no interest in the element locally, should large deposits be found, will Capella put the **moratorium** to the test?

Krienke called the **moratorium**, "ludicrous. We're not actively for or against the **moratorium**," he said, "But it isn't the

way to go; all it does is stop a whole lot of other things that are good. The government would be better off imposing stronger sanctions that would allow **uranium** to be explored safely.”

Morse said what it will boil down to is the democratic process. “The **moratorium** was put in on the whim of the government and it can be taken out on a whim. It comes down to what the people of **Nova Scotia** want.”