

# Statements

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## Gregor Wilson- Setting the Context

I would personally like to start by acknowledging we are on unceded Mi'kmaq territory.

My name is Gregor Wilson and I am a member of Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources Geoscience division has been working to promote gold mining through its Warwick Mountain (Eastern Cobequid Highlands) Gold Project. DNR has released a data package for the area and plans to release a *Request for Proposals* (RFP) in late August or September 2018.

DNR's Warwick Mountain Gold Project area includes seven watersheds, the heart of the Tatamagouche drinking supply and potentially flows through thirty communities and into both the Northumberland Strait and the Bay of Fundy,

DNR's Warwick Mountain Gold Project area is surrounded by thriving, rural communities such as Tatamagouche, Masstown, Wentworth and Earltown. These and other nearby communities are home to flourishing tourism, recreational opportunities, farming, fishing sectors and picturesque communities. These communities are all growing in popularity as year round destinations.

The Warwick Mountain Gold Project area and downstream communities are home to;

- hundreds of traditional farms
- dozens of maple syrup producers and retailers
- dozens of tourism operators
- some of the Maritmes finest hiking trails systems and waterfalls
- organic vegetable farmers
- organic blueberry growers
- vineyards
- an organic brewery
- distilleries
- 'Threatened' Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic Salmon habitat along four rivers
- "Species of Special Concern' Atlantic salmon spawning habitat in three Northumberland Strait draining rivers that are also some of mainland Nova Scotia's healthiest salmon rivers
- thousands of cottages along the Northumberland Strait and the Bay of Fundy

Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia commissioned respected hydro geochemist Dr. Ann Maest to analyze DNR's data package for threats to water quality. Her report clearly outlines that DNR has their RFP cart ahead of their research horse.

Some of Dr. Maest's advice was common sense, she says 'allowing gold mining in an area containing a known drinking water resource and salmon spawning habitat must be questioned.' This is particularly disturbing considering she also said the French River (Tatamagouche drinking supply) has "some of the cleanest water I have ever seen".

Neither DNR nor any Nova Scotia government department has completed a risk assessment of their gold projects on local communities and watersheds or researched the local socio-economic effects of such gold project.

DNR has several years of research to do before they release the Warwick Mountain Gold Project RFP.

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### [John Perkins- Importance of the report](#)

**Good Morning.** My name is John Perkins and I'm a member of the citizen group Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia - SuNNS.

Last November we discovered that the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has high hopes for a major gold find in the Cobequid Hills of Northern Nova Scotia based on 6 years of geological studies. Now they are planning to request proposals from gold mining companies to explore and mine a 70,000 acre block of land. The French River Watershed, a recognised but unprotected watersource, is in the epicentre of the mining zone.

To us it was insane to allow gold mining in the source of drinking water for Tatamagouche, water for community wells, and healthy salmon rivers. We needed help and expertise expertise to better understand the threat.

We found Dr. Ann Maest a hydro geochemist with extensive experience in mining and water. She has been studying such things for 25 years on assignments around the world. Her full biography is in the media kit.

We asked her to review the geological information and the limited baseline water studies provided by DNR and comment on the possible impact on the water with respect to human and aquatic life.

Her report to be released today on our website discusses potential water quality impacts from mine development and additional research information needed before exploration. There are links to the full report and her webinar presentation to policy makers yesterday in the media kit.

Her first comment was quote...“the available geological information was relevant for exploration but didn't include information needed to evaluate environmental impacts especially on water.” Water that she says quote....“is some of the cleanest water she's ever seen”.

These environmental impacts include: acid mine drainage which is releasing sulphuric acid into the environment; the leaching of toxic minerals such as arsenic, antimony, mercury; and compromising water for drinking and aquatic life.

Given these threats she said... quote.... ‘the advisability of allowing gold mining in an area containing a known drinking water resource and salmon spawning habitat must be questioned”.

A summary of her other recommendations is:

1. Mineral exploration activities need to be carefully regulated and remediated because of the potential for adverse impacts during exploration;
2. Detailed baseline water quality studies of surface water and groundwater is needed over a 2 year period prior to exploration.
3. More information called geochemical characterization is needed on mineralogy, acid drainage and the contaminant leaching potential because of the exploration zone having such close proximity to water, because of the purity of water.

These are important recommendations that we will be bringing to the various provincial and municipal authorities. It is essential that Nova Scotians understand the lengths to which governments will go to allow extraction of our mineral resources at the cost of the environment and we appreciate your efforts in bringing this to the attention of Nova Scotians.

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### [Kathryn Anderson- The broader context](#)

For most of my life, phrases like “open pit mines”, “acid mine drainage” and “tailings ponds” meant little. All that changed in 2004 in Guatemala, a country where I have been deeply involved in human rights solidarity since 1984. In Guatemala serious human rights violations and government corruption are constants.

In March of 2004 a Guatemalan colleague informed us that a Canadian mining company was imposing a gold mining project on indigenous communities without any consultation whatsoever, in spite of an international treaty requiring them to do so. Thus, for the last 14 years, I have become a witness to the negative impacts of mining by

several Canadian companies throughout Guatemala. I have seen gold mining projects that have caused water and air contamination, skin diseases, de-forestation, and destruction of agriculture.

Now, 15 years later, a major mine is closing, leaving the risk of further contamination over the next century to be borne by the surrounding communities. All this for a metal that is used almost exclusively only for adornment and financial speculation with gold bars.

Nonetheless it never once occurred to me during this period, even though I was witnessing the impacts of Canadian companies, that a similar project might take place in Nova Scotia. I never dreamt that the Nova Scotia Government would permit mining exploration for gold, which may lead to open pit mining in a decade or so, without an extensive and open community consultation process. I assumed that thorough research would be undertaken concerning the potential for acid mine drainage and other negative impacts before any invitation to explore would be offered.

I most certainly did not think that the Government of Nova Scotia would even consider gold mining in a community water source watershed. I had naively assumed that since, unlike Guatemala, we live in a highly developed democracy and in a province which speaks of sustainable development in the 21st century (witness the Ivany Report), mining exploration would be clearly legislated to include a transparent and independent consultation process. I was wrong.

In Nova Scotia, in 2018, the Department of Natural Resources is permitted to encourage mining exploration and mining projects throughout the province without any requirement for an independent, transparent process of community consultation, where the risks are openly and clearly shared and discussed. Nor is there any requirement for thorough research of potential risks to be undertaken, including risks of mining in watersheds, that is, the concerns raised by Dr. Maest.

The DNR has the legal right to proceed without a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether mining is the most environmentally and economically sustainable development in a region such as Northern Nova Scotia which has a huge potential for recreation, tourism and small business development. In other words, mining trumps sustainable development, evidence-based policies and practices and citizen participation. Surely Nova Scotia can do better than Guatemala.