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For Immediate Release

Bill to amend Labrador Inuit Lands Act passes

Hopedale, NL - The Nunatsiavut Government voted today to place a moratorium on the working, production, mining and development of uranium on Labrador Inuit Lands. The amendment to the Labrador Inuit Lands Act, which takes effect immediately, also requires the issue to be revisited after March 31, 2011.

“The Nunatsiavut Government is committed to ensuring the long-term protection of the environment for current and future Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement,” Lands and Resources Minister William Barbour said following the Assembly decision.

Inuit are concerned about the negative environmental and public health effects associated with uranium mining, Mr. Barbour said, adding that a moratorium will give the Nunatsiavut Government more time to make informed decisions on the mining and milling of uranium within Labrador Inuit Lands.

“We are a new government, established on December 1, 2005, and we do not yet have the necessary tools for evaluating the impacts of large-scale development projects on our lands, nor for protecting the environment in light of these projects,” the Minister said. “During the next three years we will place focus on establishing a lands administration system, developing an Environmental Assessment Act and environmental protection legislation. We will also develop a Land Use Plan for the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area.”

The decision was not an easy one for the Assembly to make, the Minister said.

“We listened to the concerns of Beneficiaries throughout Nunatsiavut, as well as the Lake Melville and Canadian constituencies,” he said. “The majority of those surveyed and consulted told us they are not comfortable, at this time, with seeing a mine and mill developed. They told us they want assurances that the environment will be protected and that there will be no risks associated with a mine and mill. They have entrusted us to act in their best interests, and this is what we have done.”



Nunatsiavut
kavamanga Government

The moratorium does not apply to the exploration of uranium, the Minister noted, adding that the Nunatsiavut Government is willing and committed to working with mining companies while the moratorium is in place.

“We are prepared to work with any company wanting to conduct exploration within our territory,” he said. “During the course of the next three years we will build our human resources capacity to effectively govern our land and resources and effectively participate in environmental protection and management together with industry and other governments.”

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