

OPEN LETTER: Protect farmland and private land from Bill-75

To: Premier Blaine Higgs

CC: MLA's

We, the undersigned are very concerned by Bill-75, which includes an amendment to the Mining Act that would give prospectors leave to go onto private land (including farmland and private forests) without notification or permission of the landowner.

The amendment has serious implications to farmers, private woodlot owners, and private landowners, as a prospector using hand tools or taking samples equivalent to 2 kilograms or 2 litres would not be considered actual damage or interference to the use and enjoyment of the land. A prospector simply driving in fields, let alone tampering with soil and plants, can cause significant damage to the crops and livelihoods of farmers and create a biosecurity risk. Special management zones in private forests, often mandated by government regulation, contain unique and at-risk species, which can be compromised by unsanctioned activities.

Mining companies have often claimed they have little interest in mineral claims on cultivated land due to fertilizer and pesticide use, but New Brunswick farmers indicate that this is not true and regularly have stakes or prospectors on their land, particularly in Charlotte County. The agriculture and forest sectors have also raised concerns over the safety of prospectors, who are not trained or equipped to handle the onsite hazards.

As no consultation occurred with the agricultural or forestry industries, or the general public prior to the 1st reading, 2nd reading or Committee debate of this Bill, we believe there has been a breach of due process.

The Department of Energy and Resource Development has failed to communicate the proposed changes in Bill-75 and the implications to landowners. We, the undersigned are dismayed by the absence of consultation on the proposed changes and the repercussions for the agriculture and forestry sectors and private landowners. We request that the Mining Act protect the rights of farmland, private forests and private land, and that consultations now take place with the public and industries concerned.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick
Apples Growers of New Brunswick
Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network
Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network

BioNB
Camerise NB Haskap
Canadian Union of Public Employees, New Brunswick
Community Harvest Gardens Inc.
Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Council of Canadians, Fredericton Chapter
Council of Canadians, Saint John Chapter
Dairy Farmers of New Brunswick
Egg Farmers of New Brunswick
Food For All NB Aliments pour tous NB
Fundy Biosphere Region
Green Light NB Enviro Club Feu Vert Inc.
Groupe ÉcoVie
Hammond River Angling Association
Imaginons la Péninsule acadienne autrement
J.D. Irving
Le Groupe de développement durable du Pays de Cocagne
LSD Saint David Advisory Committee
Marché régional de Caraquet Inc.
MiningWatch
National Farmers Union
National Farmers Union in New Brunswick
NB Cattle Producers
NB Media Coop
New Brunswick Anti-Shale Gas Alliance
New Brunswick Beekeepers Association
New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice
New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners
New Brunswick Maple Syrup Association
Notre Environnement Notre Choix
Porc NB Pork
Potatoes New Brunswick
Public for the Protection of the Forests of New Brunswick
Really Local Harvest
Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick
Rural Action and Voices for the Environment Network
Solidarité Fredericton
Standing for Water
Sustainable Energy Group
Tantramar Alliance Against Hydro-Fracking
Taymouth Environmental Action Group
Voices for Sustainable Environments and Communities