

OP-ED Our Communities Deserve Clean Energy, Not New Fossil Fuels

By Dr. Catherine Cervin

We all deserve clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, and a healthy community in which to raise our kids. As a retired doctor, I spent many decades protecting people's health, and part of that job was telling people the truth, even when it was hard to hear. That's why I believe our province needs an honest conversation about what new gas plants and fracking would mean for the air, water and communities that our health depends on.

Our health and the health of our environment go hand in hand. When you pollute the air, soil, or water, the harms don't stay "out there" in nature. They end up in our clinics, emergency rooms, and homes.

Right now, Nova Scotia is spending millions of dollars to attract companies to explore for gas beneath our feet and off our shores. The push is also on to build two new gas and diesel power plants in Pictou County.

We're being sold a clean, safe story. A report by the Center for Climate Integrity shows how oil and gas companies spent decades running "clean natural gas" ad campaigns built to cast doubt on solid health and climate science. But no ad campaign can hide what this industry's products do in the real world.

Take fracking, the way gas is pulled from the ground. It blasts millions of litres of fresh water, sand, and toxic chemicals deep underground to crack open rock. It uses huge amounts of water from local lakes and rivers, then turns it into toxic wastewater

full of heavy metals, chemicals, and even radioactive material where uranium is present. Companies are allowed to hide the exact chemical recipe as a "trade secret." We're being asked to trust an industry that won't even tell us what it's putting in the ground. The EXPERIVA study in British Columbia found these substances showing up in people's tap water and indoor air.

Physicians who treat patients near fracking sites see the health harms firsthand. In the short term, exposure to fracking pollution can trigger asthma attacks and send more people to hospital with breathing problems. Over time, studies link it to higher rates of heart disease, childhood leukemia, and rare cancers. Studies also link living near fracked wells to more premature births and low birth weights — a leading cause of infant death in Canada.

Burning gas for electricity brings more toxic air pollution, including fine soot and nitrogen oxides that trigger asthma, strain the heart, and raise cancer risk. The Pictou County plants would also burn diesel as backup in winter. According to Health Canada and the World Health Organization, diesel exhaust causes cancer. It's also known to cause serious breathing problems, and may lead to heart problems. More pollution puts more strain on our health system and raises costs for everyone.

These harms won't be shared evenly. Rural and First Nations communities living closest to the plants and drilling sites will carry the most risk. Children, seniors, pregnant people, and those already living with illness will be hit hardest. They didn't create this problem, but their bodies will pay for it.

We're often told gas is the "only way" to keep the lights on or grow the economy. As a doctor, I can't accept that making our neighbours and children sick is the only way to build a strong future for Nova Scotia. Affordable battery storage, energy efficiency, and modern grid tools are already delivering reliable, affordable power right here in Atlantic Canada. We can choose to build on that without trading away our health.

Our communities deserve the full facts about the health risks of fossil fuels before any project is approved. And First Nations must be consulted as full Treaty partners, with free, prior, and informed consent.

So let's take a breath and have an honest conversation — with our families, our neighbours, and our local leaders — about the risks we're willing to take, and to place on others, if we allow new fossil fuel exploration and build new gas plants. Deciding what kind of province we want to live in, and what we'll leave for our children and grandchildren, is too important to leave up to an industry known for covering up truth.

Catherine Cervin is a retired family physician living in Halifax and a past president of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (2020-21). She is chair of Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment-Nova Scotia (CAPE NS). CAPE is a national physician-led non-profit dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. Learn more at cape.ca.

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OP-ED Premier's Statement on U.S. Tariffs

We cannot trust or rely on the United States

Canada's negotiating team tried to secure a deal for Canadians, which I've forcefully and vocally supported.

I continue to stand ready to support and work with the Prime Minister. We will work together to do everything possible to protect the massive number of Nova Scotian and Canadian families, workers and businesses that have now been added to the large list of those directly impacted by President Trump's devastating tariffs.

It's clear that we cannot trust or rely on the United States as we once did. This reality must make us more determined than ever to make Nova Scotia and Canada stronger. For Nova

Scotia that means developing our own energy, developing our own natural resources and finding new markets for Nova Scotian goods and services.

We have tremendous opportunities and I am fully committed to seizing them.

Building up Nova Scotia is the only true path to protecting our future. Potential doesn't build hospitals and roads. Turning potential into reality does.

This is our time to find the common ground necessary to build. This is how we make ourselves stronger and protect our future.

Let's make it happen.

Let's go Team Canada!

Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia can be reached at: premier@novascotia.ca or 902-424-6600



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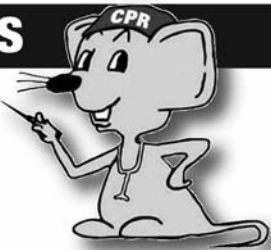
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