

Mineral Exploration in Nova Scotia for Landowners

Frequently Asked Questions

What are mineral exploration licences and claims?

Most minerals in Nova Scotia are owned by the Province (the Crown), not by the surface landowner. An exploration licence gives the licence holder the exclusive right to explore for minerals within a defined area, known as claims. An exploration licence does not permit mining, production, or even ground-disturbing exploration (drilling, trenching, etc.).

Can I see where mineral licences are located?

Yes. Information about exploration licences, mineral leases, and other related rights is publicly available through the Province's mineral rights registry and online mapping tools maintained by the Department of Natural Resources ([NovaROC](#)).

An exploration licence has been issued over my land. What happens next?

An exploration licence holder must get your permission before entering your property. If permission is gained, samples may be collected and the area studied. Most exploration activity is early stage and low impact, such as mapping, sampling, and surveys. Only a very small number of exploration projects advance to mine development. If a mine is pursued, several approvals would be required as well as landowner agreements.

What are my rights as a landowner?

Landowners in Nova Scotia generally own surface rights, not mineral rights. Exploration licence holders require written access permission from the landowner before completing ground-disturbing work. Before undertaking ground disturbing work on private land, licence holders must contact landowners, explain the proposed work, and follow the legal surface access process, including compensation where applicable.

Can exploration occur without my consent?

In rare circumstances, the Province may grant surface access rights under the [Mineral Resources Act](#). This process follows prescribed legal steps and includes provisions related to compensation and remediation.

What if I have concerns or problems?

Landowners are encouraged to start by communicating directly with the exploration licence holder. If concerns cannot be resolved, the Department of Natural Resources or the Registrar of Mineral and Petroleum Titles can provide further information and assistance.

How can I benefit from mineral exploration on my land?

Mineral exploration helps us learn what's underground and whether it could pose any risks to people's health and safety. Mineral exploration also has the potential to provide you with financial compensation and infrastructure improvements to your property.

