



Nova Scotia - Dalhousie Agreement to Develop Onshore Gas (SERDIP 2026): What you Need to Know – Summary

In December 2025, the Houston Government announced that they were allocating \$30 million in hopes of kickstarting onshore gas development in Nova Scotia. Dalhousie University was selected to administer a Subsurface Energy R&D Investment Program (SERDIP). This program follows the Houston government's decision that Nova Scotia's economic future should be based on aggressive resource extraction including fossil fuels, and its repeal of Nova Scotia's 2014 ban on hydraulic fracturing.

The SERDIP program is deeply problematic in its fundamental intent, to start an onshore fracked gas industry at a time when that industry is a known major contributor to climate change and a well-documented risk to human health, clean water resources, and community wellbeing.

Nova Scotia Fracking Resource and Action Coalition (NOFRAC) looked closely at the Agreement between the Province and Dalhousie. We found many provisions of the SERDIP Agreement to be of serious concern. These are some issues that earned our Red Flag warning label.



Government has full control of information

The Province, not Dalhousie, decides what information will be made public and what information will not be made public. Further, the parties agree to return, destroy or irrevocably erase confidential documents and material after receiving a written request. This could include information that might be used to establish liability for any harm caused during the program.



Limited ability to correct misinformation

Confidentiality requirements and the Province's control of information could restrict the right of Dalhousie participants to publicly set the record straight on misinformation.



No commitment to transparency

Important information may not be available to the public. Dalhousie's public commitment to transparency is constrained by the Province's control over what may be released.



Genuine community participation and informed consent lacking

There are no meaningful opportunities for public analysis, public participation or objection. Project aims include "creating community readiness," "preparing communities for potential energy development," and "building public confidence," but omit the importance of community consent.



First Nations opposition to fracking ignored

On March 28, 2025, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs reaffirmed a resolution passed in 2014 stating their opposition to hydraulic fracturing. The Agreement ignores this opposition.



Risks to fresh water supplies

Fracking uses and contaminates massive amounts of fresh water during normal operations. Nova Scotia experiences severe droughts. Contamination of wells and aquifers from drilling, fracking and millions of gallons of wastewater disposal have been documented in published studies.



Health impact study does not study health impacts

The study as described in the Agreement will not actually evaluate health impacts of unconventional gas exploration. Instead, it plans to “prepare[s] communities for potential energy production by strengthening health literacy.”



Earthquake risks

Both fracking and underground wastewater disposal have been found to trigger earthquakes, including in areas with no previous experience of earthquakes.



Rushed timeline increases risks

Reliable conclusions that will protect people and the environment cannot be drawn from data from drilling and fracking a handful of wells over several months. More than 2500 studies, carried out over two decades, overwhelmingly document multiple risks from the unconventional gas industry.



How will exploration activities be regulated?

While the Agreement states that exploration agreements will be granted “conditional on regulatory compliance,” it contains no information about what regulations will apply to water use, wastewater handling, air emissions, noise, proximity to residences, schools, hospitals, nursing homes or wells, or time frames and standards for site cleanup.



How will exploration activities be monitored and enforced?

There is no information in the Agreement outlining how monitoring and enforcement of regulations will be carried out. It appears that monitoring will cease at the end of the four-month study period. The Agreement makes no provision for monitoring water or air quality for the full range of contaminants associated with the industry before, during and after exploratory drilling and fracking.



Reputational and commercial risks to Dalhousie

The terms of the agreement restrict Dalhousie’s right to speak independently, to conduct open-ended studies, to release or freely speak about research results, and to freely exchange information with communities. Dal’s participation in this program on these terms will impact its reputation in the academic and research world and its relationship with communities, including the Mi’kmaq. Dalhousie’s participation in selecting companies for exploration work, along with their agreement to allow the Province full control of information, leave the university open to commercial risk as well.

NOFRAC Conclusion:

Rather than building public confidence, the terms of the SERDIP agreement should increase public concerns and increase opposition to the Houston government’s plans to open Nova Scotia to an onshore gas industry including fracking.

[Read the full analysis](#)

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