

MPP's tour of uranium site 'eye opening'

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MPP Rick Johnson got an "eye-opener" Thursday when he was taken to Bancroft Uranium's exploration site and saw the destruction done to the trees and earth in search of radioactive rock.

Fulfilling his promise to meet with members of Fight Uranium Mining and Exploration, Robin Simpson and Christine Atrill, Johnson was taken on a tour of the site on County Road 503 to get a better sense of what cottagers and residents of Haliburton County are faced with.

"It was informative, it was eye-opening and it was somewhat disturbing at times, you know, all the damage that's going on. And maybe all of the permits have been filed and maybe that's what it's supposed to look like. It makes me ask some questions," Johnson said.

Roger Young and Susanne Lauten of Cottagers against Uranium Mining and Exploration were also on the tour.

"He said he was very disappointed the trees were bulldozed and cut down, ground was cut up and disturbed," Young said.

"He's checking into whether due diligence was done by the province," he said.

The site is on Crown land, but Johnson said the uranium company still had to obtain permits, which he is going to check up on.

Young impressed upon Johnson that cottagers aren't interested in living alongside mines and that tourism and cottage taxes are the mainstays of Haliburton's economy. It is important, he said, to keep the cottagers here and the mining out.

"Obviously it has the potential to have a huge impact in this area and I absolutely understand the economic benefit of cottages and I get that," Johnson said.

Later in the day the MPP travelled to Minden to meet with Bonnie Fleischaker from the Coalition for Equitable Water Flow.

There he learned more about the struggles that group is having with the Trent-Severn Waterway and the water levels on many of the lakes that feed the canal system.

"You see pictures of what is supposed to be a lake and it's just a dock sitting on a rock, that's a little ... interesting," he said.

Johnson has already spoken with Ontario's Minister of the Environment, John Gerretsen, about the TSW report, It's All About the Water, and will find out what the province can do to follow through with the recommendations from the federal paper. Johnson also plans to join the TSW caucus, which former MPP Laurie Scott attended.