

Uranium exploration : Baie des Chaleurs communities at risk!



Oak Bay marshland

Prepared for the **Coalition STOP Uranium Baie des Chaleurs**

by Michel Goudreau
Pointe-à-la-Croix, November 2010

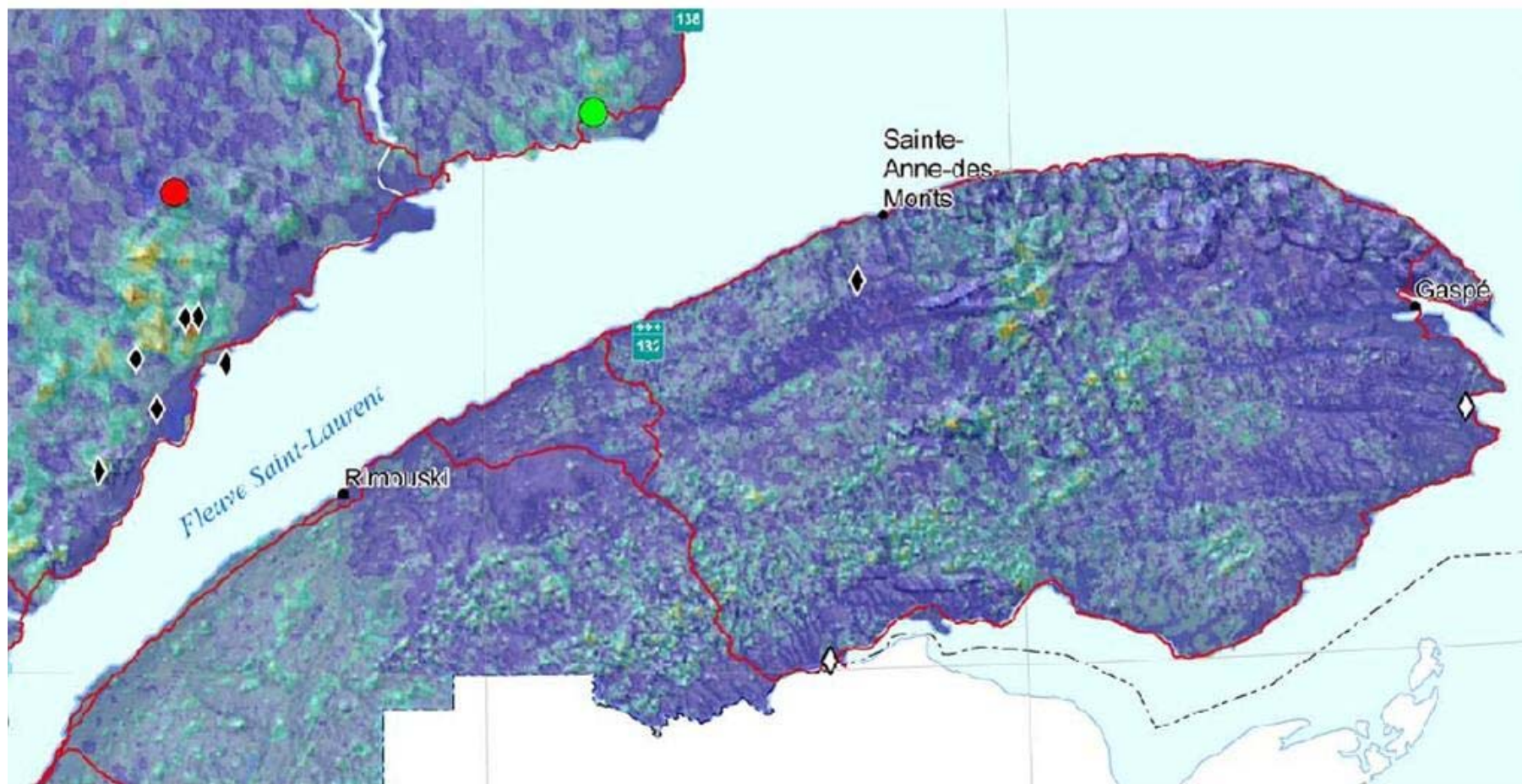
Summary

- **Uranium: Why search for it? Why exploit it?**
- **Its presence in the Baie des Chaleurs area**
- **The current project**
- **The promoter: Terra Firma Resources**
- **Quebec's Mining Act**
- **The threats**
 - **To health**
 - **To the environment**
 - **To other users (agriculture, tourism, etc.)**
- **The government's attitude**
- **Is this socially acceptable?**
- **Making a change: a citizen's coalition**

Uranium: Why search for it? Why exploit this resource?

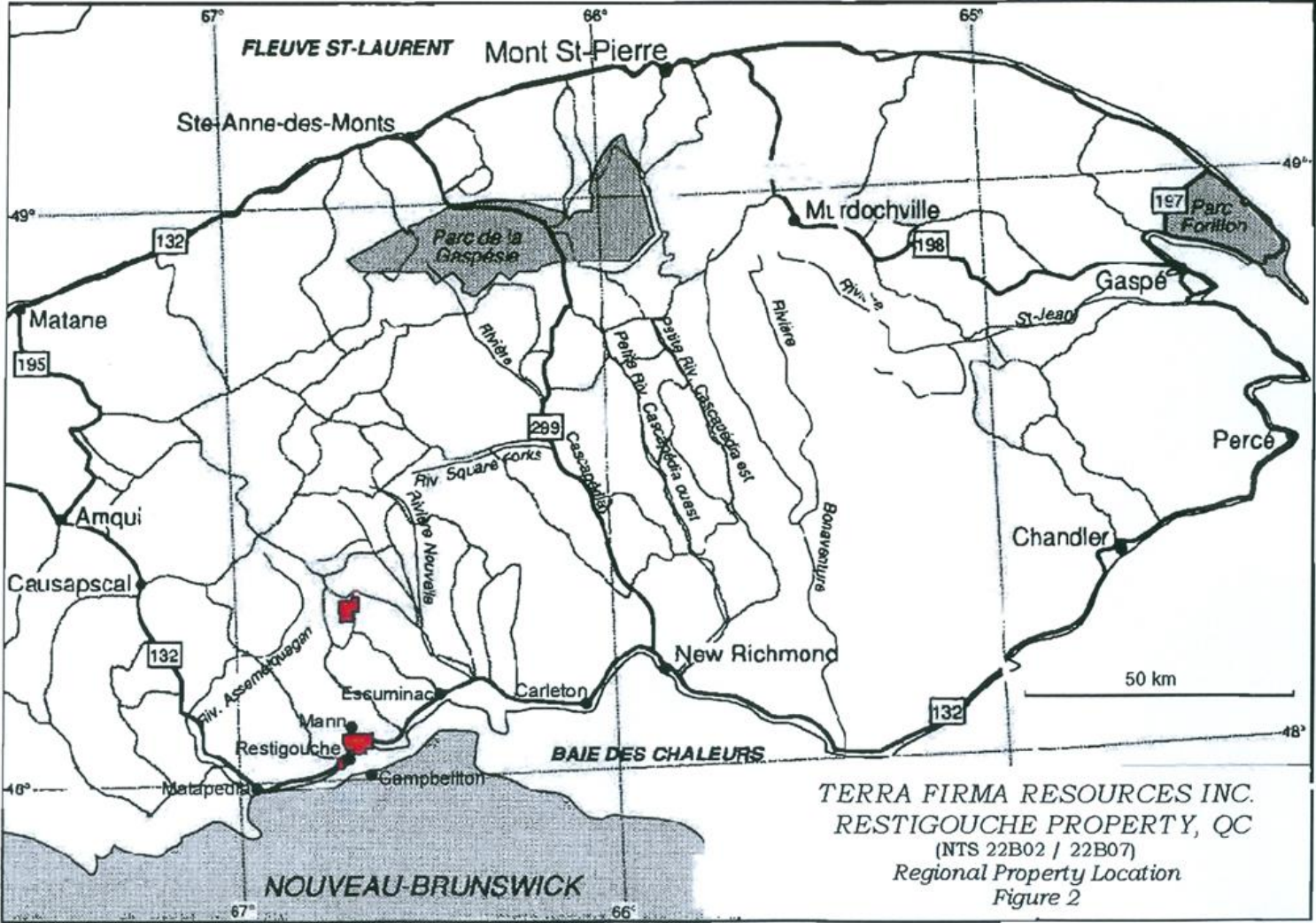
- Not one uranium mine in Quebec at present, but much prospecting activity going on
- Reason for all the interest? The price of uranium is very high, so there is plenty of money to be made
- Current prospecting is not necessary for Quebec's needs: Saskatchewan currently produces enough!
- So, is this a **worthwhile** risk?

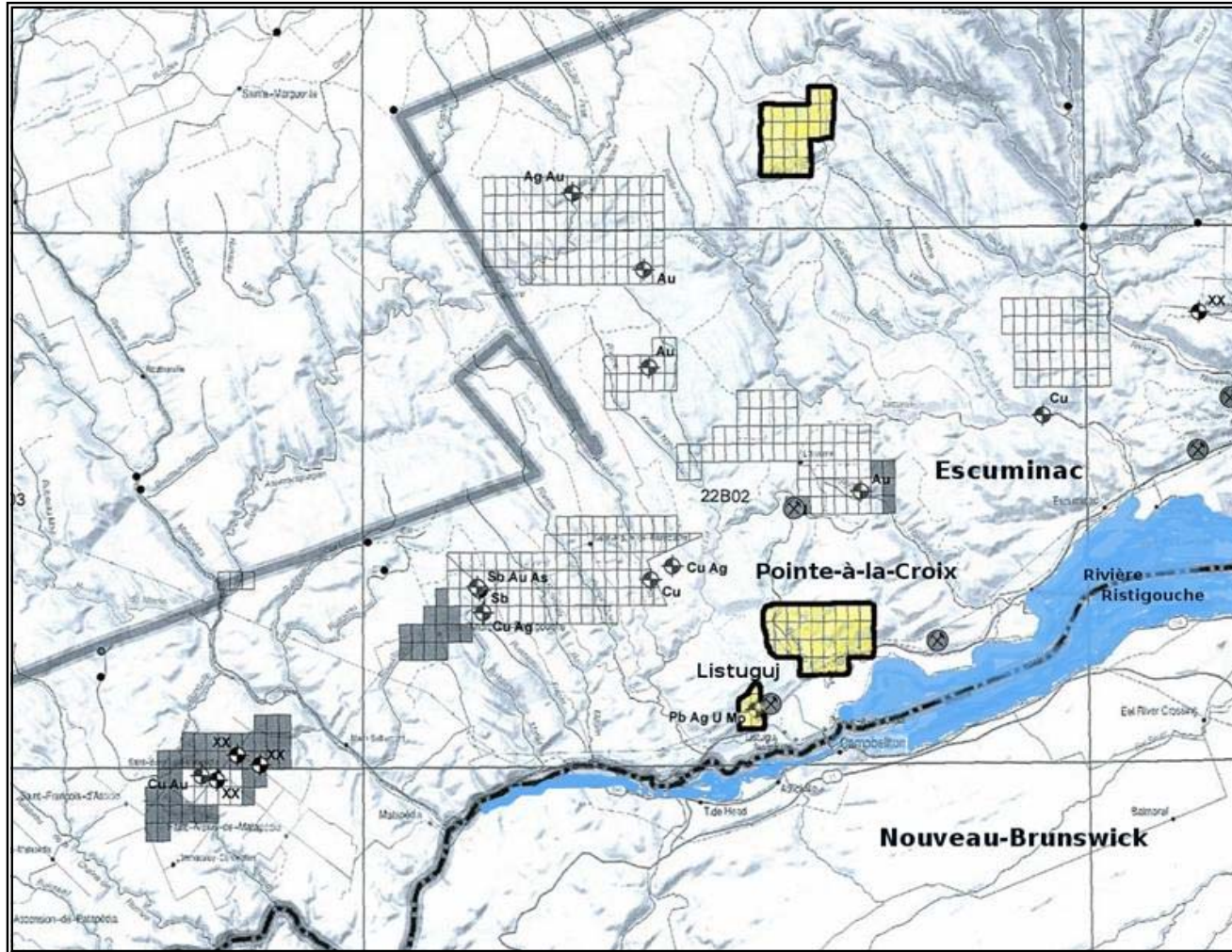
Sites potentiels de gisements d'uranium appelés "gîtes d'uranium"



Source: Carte de l'uranium au Québec
Ministère des Ressources naturelles, 2009

Blocks where the first prospecting will take place





Blocs of claims for uranium in yellow

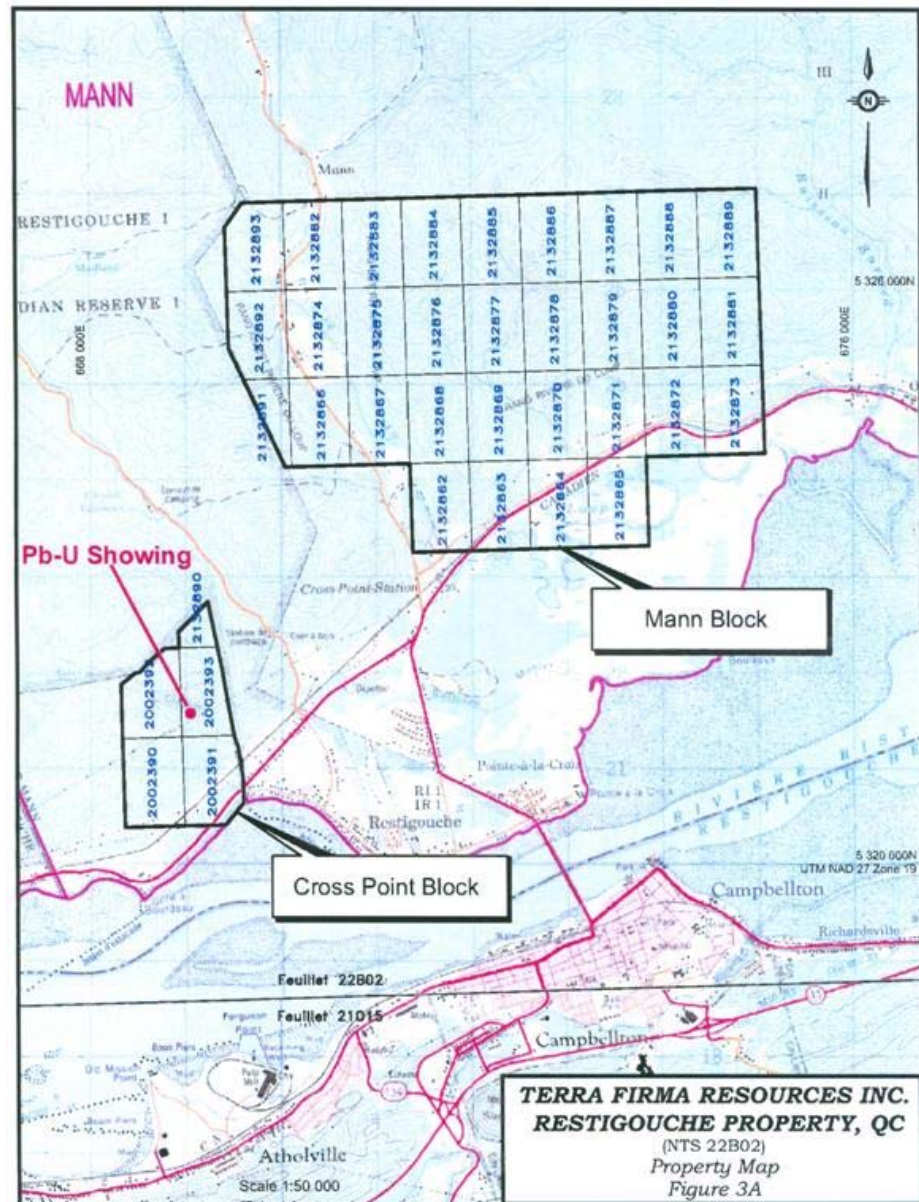
The project:
Prospecting for uranium
in 3 blocks:

1. Cross Point block

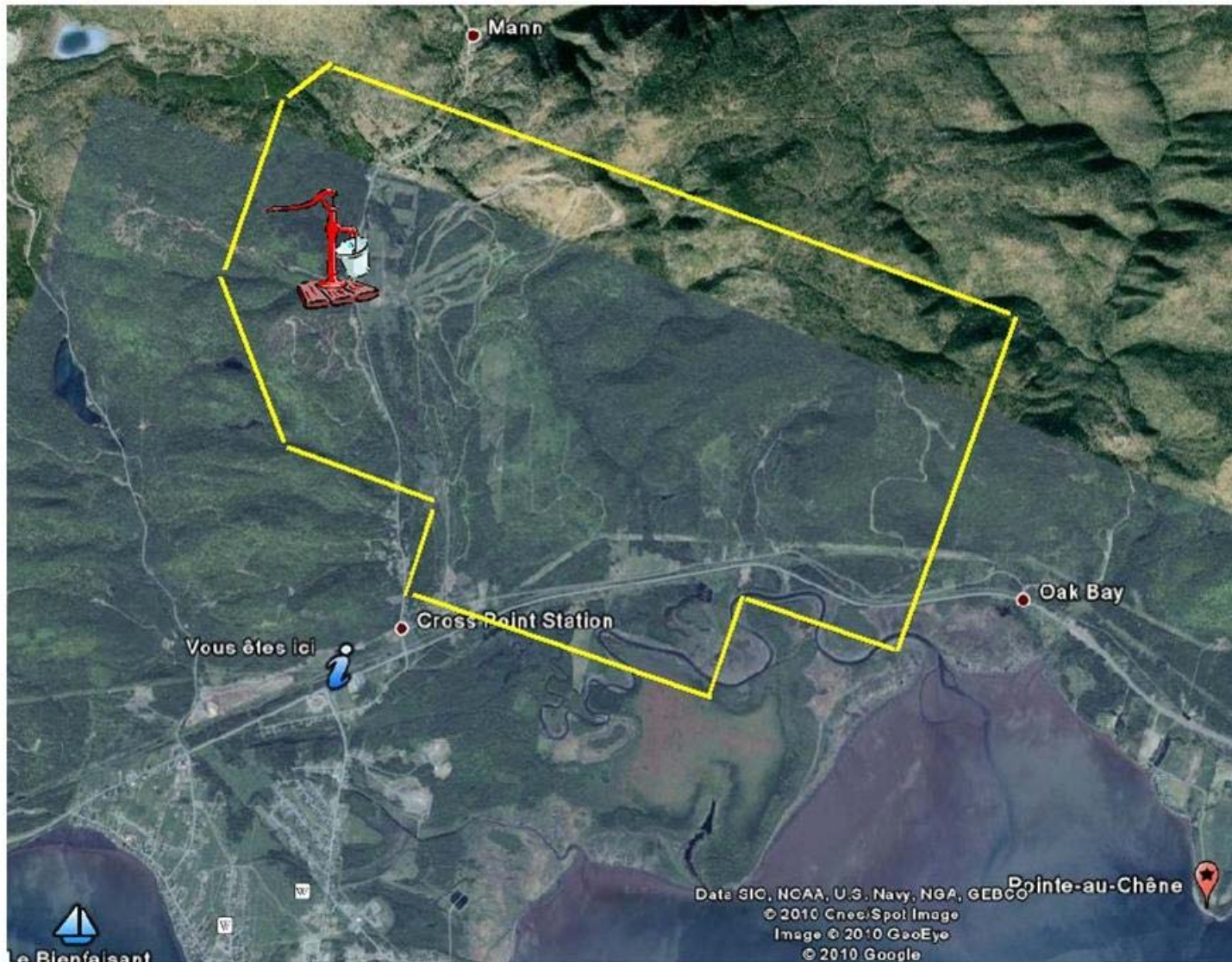
208 ha; 1,2 by 1,8 km
Adjacent to the Listuguj
Reserve and the
Restigouche River on
land destined to
become part of Listuguj

2. Mann block

3,227 ha; 5,6 by 3,6 km
Includes residential area the
municipal water source and
the watershed of
the Petite-Rivière-du-
Loup



Claims miniers et marais de Baie au Chêne

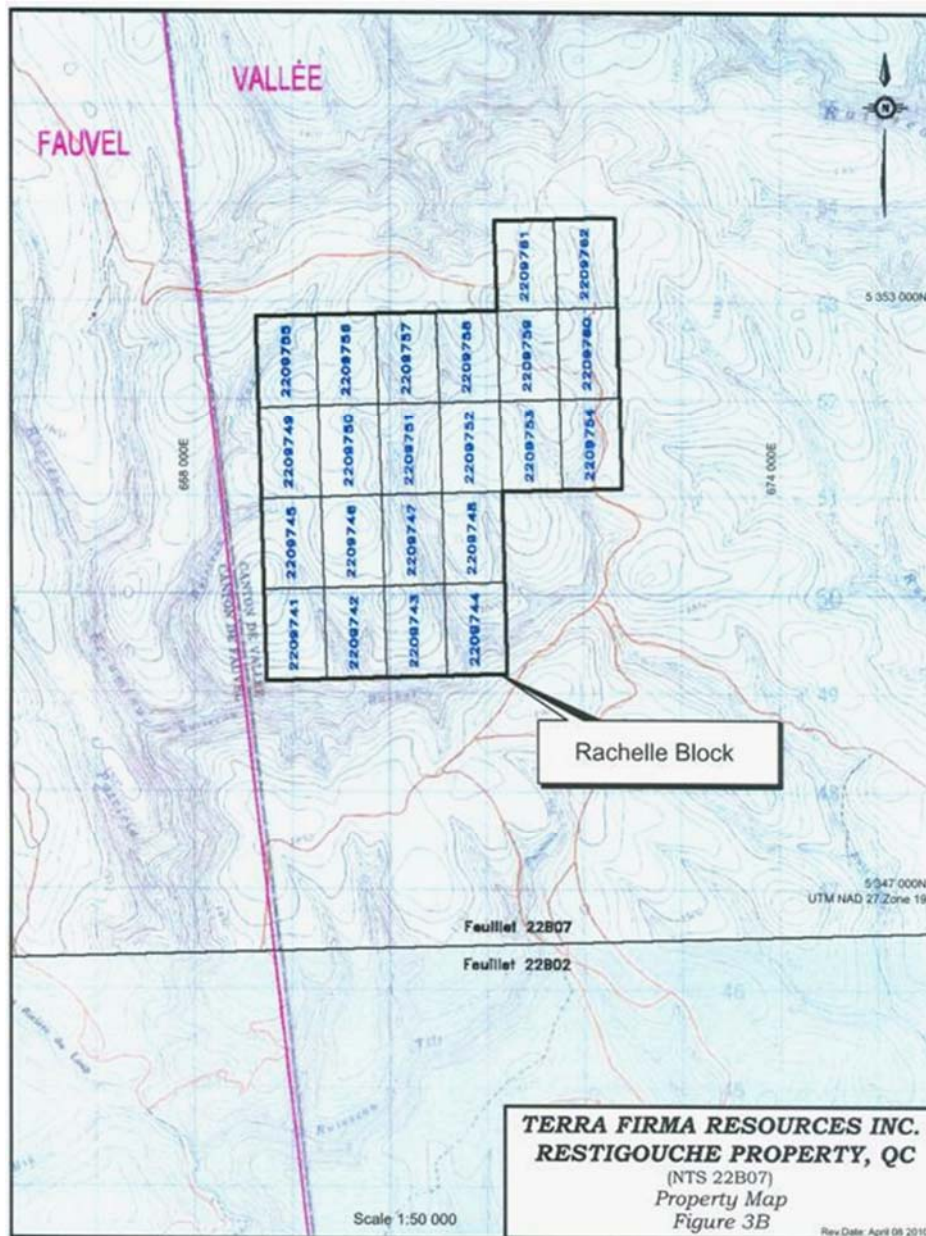


Uranium prospecting

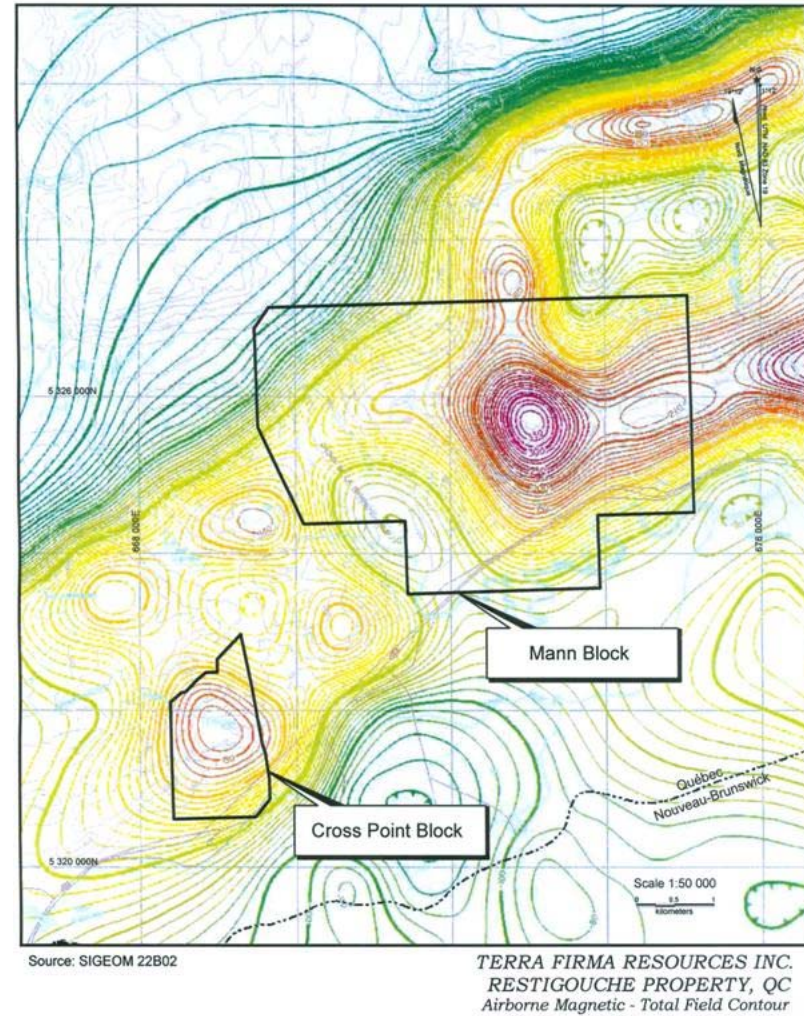
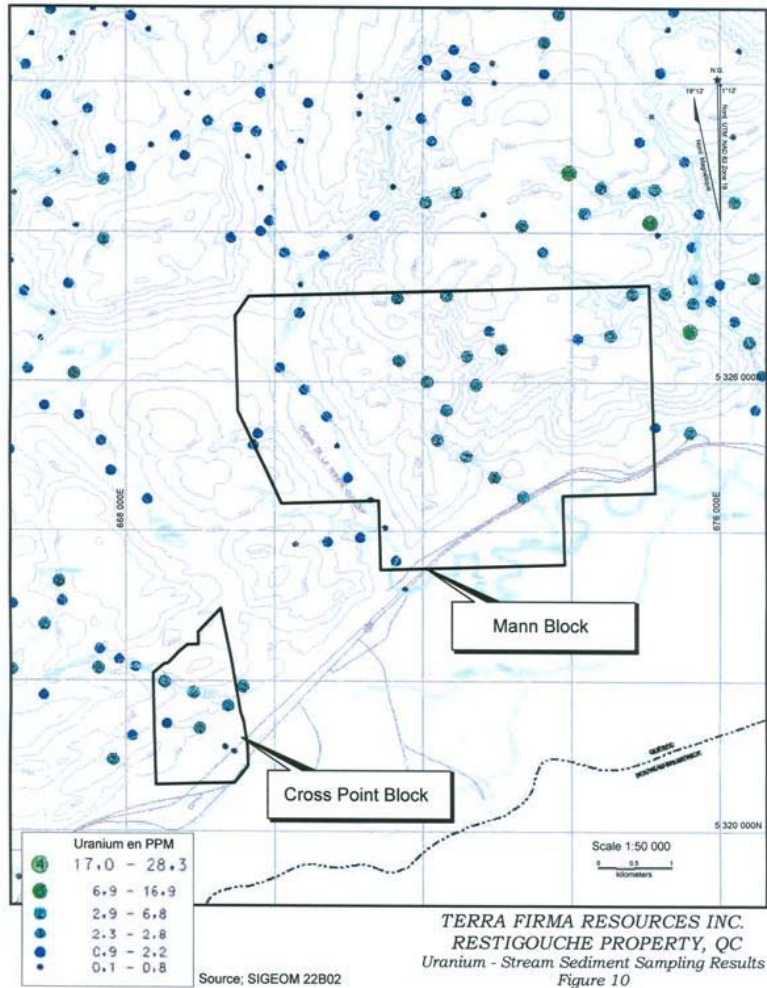
3. The Rachele Block

covers 1,260 ha;
3,7 km by 4,6 km
Situated to the north
of the Escuminac
River and in its
watershed.

About 12 km to the northeast
of the Village of L'Alverne
(in non-organized territory
within MRC Avignon)



New techniques = multiplication of sites



The Terra Firma Resources project

- **Prospecting to take place over three years**
- **Investments estimated at \$750,000 during this period**
- **Start of activities planned for spring 2011**
- **The prospecting will take place in a number of ways:**
 - **Removing topsoil**
 - **Drilling**
 - **Digging trenches**
 - **Dynamite**
 - **Etc.**

The promoter : Terra Firma Resources Inc.

- Company headquartered in Vancouver (note that BC has a moratorium against uranium mining)
- This is a *junior* prospecting company formed in 2007 with little expertise or little capital to deal with any damage as a result of its exploration activities
- According to Terra Firma, the work will be undertaken by Lockhart Exploration Services Ltd. from New Brunswick
- The mining claims were ceded to Terra Firma Resources by Vital Arsenault, a prospector from Bonaventure (who says he will be doing the exploration work).

Amongst our New Brunswick neighbours

In 2008, the New Brunswick government adopted new regulations which forbid uranium mining near drinking water sources and at least 300 metres from any residence.

That's not the case here in Quebec !



Quebec's Mining Act

- **Basic principle of the law:** Access to mineral resources takes precedent over any other use of public land.
- The mining title, or *claim* gives its holder exclusive right to exploit the minerals which are available on one or several blocks of territory.
- The law gives companies the right to expropriate land for prospecting and mining purposes.
- There is no obligation to inform or to consult with landowners or communities affected.

Quebec's Mining Act (cont'd)

- No prior environmental assessment is required.
- No authorization is required of landowners whose land is included in prospecting claims.
- Mining claims are actually an obstacle to the designation of protected areas.



An archaic law which is actually being revised

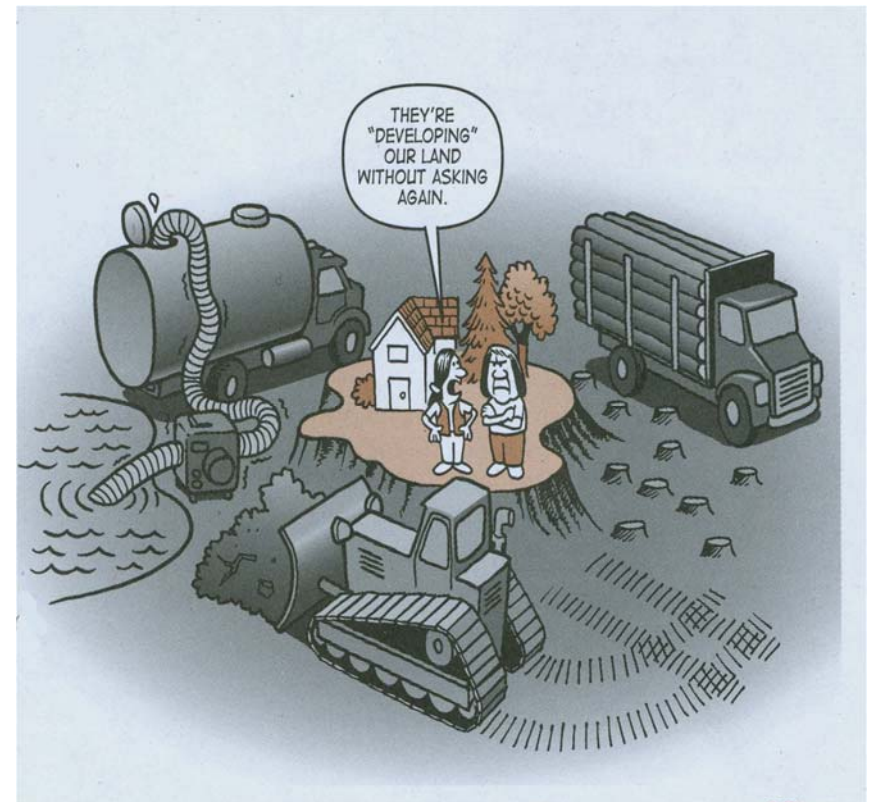
- Amendments we want to see to the Mining Act*

1. Protect the rights of citizens and communities

Ensure a real consultative democratic process at each stage of the mining process, notably through **information**, **consultation** and the **required consent** of individuals and local and regional authorities

*Proposal of the Coalition

« Pour que le Québec ait meilleure mine »



An archaic law: more proposed changes

- **2. INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Increase the number of mining projects that must submit an environmental impact study.

- **3. ENSURE SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAND**

Eliminate some mining claims in order to allow the creation of protected areas, and to reinforce municipal prerogatives through land use planning

- **4. APPLY THE POLLUTER PAY PRINCIPLE**

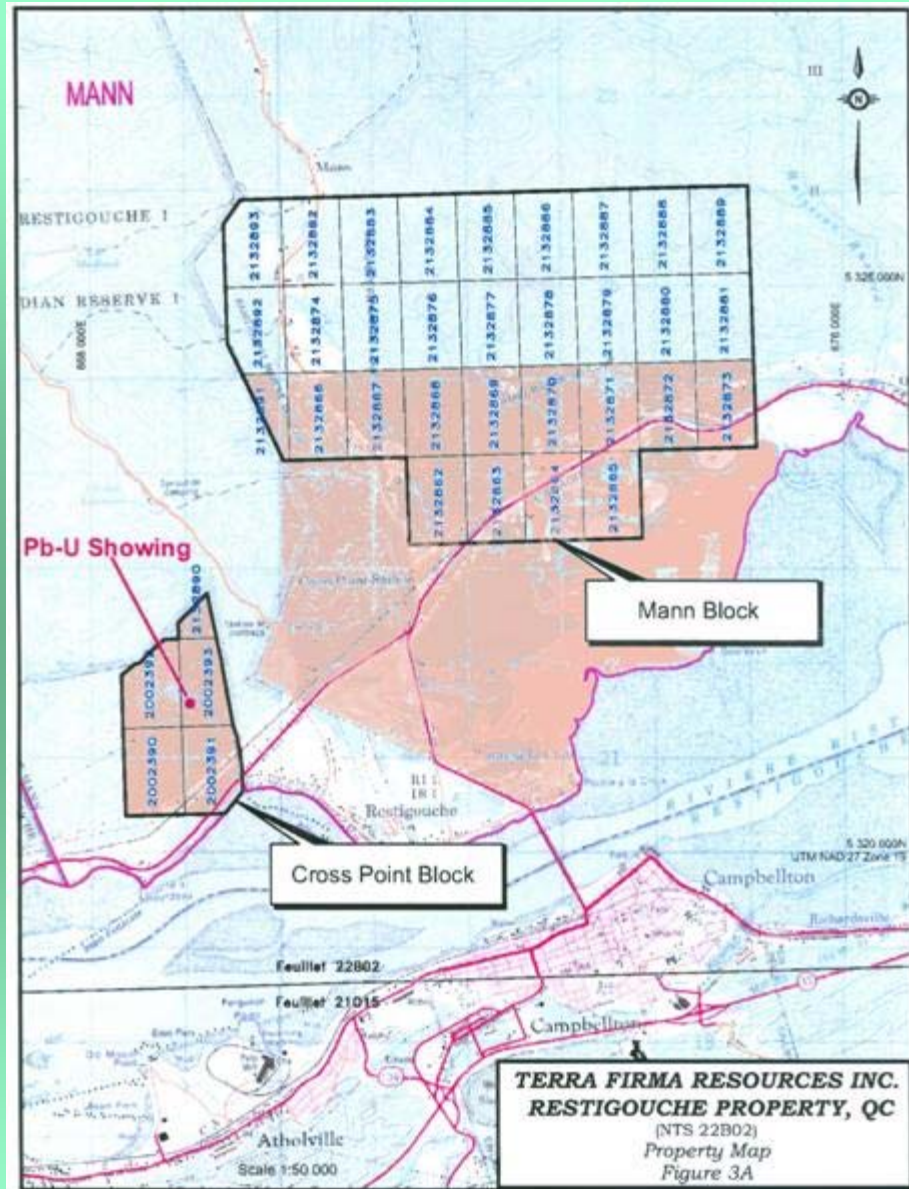
- **5. DECLARE A MORATORIUM ON URANIUM EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION ACROSS QUEBEC**

The special case of First Nations reserves

The case of Listuguj

A Supreme Court judgement requires that First Nations be consulted for any kind of development that may take place on land that is part of a land claim.

Note: land claims shown in pink are only approximate



Uranium: the dangers and risks

- ❑ For public health: Risk of contamination of underground water and wells, and increased proliferation of radioactive radon gas
- ❑ To the environment: The prospecting will take place in the Restigouche River watershed, near ecologically sensitive areas (i.e. Oak Bay marsh)
- ❑ Risk to future development in the region

Health: Uranium and its by-products are the most dangerous on Earth

- ❑ The by-products of uranium include radon gas, thorium, polonium and radium, to name just a few
- ❑ During the exploration phase: Radioactive contamination can be released into the groundwater during drilling, sampling and other prospecting activities
- ❑ Because of its health risks and in particular its carcinogenic qualities, uranium should be treated as an exception under Quebec's Mining Act
- ❑ But... so far the Quebec Mining Act and its regulations are silent on these real risks to citizens and to the environment

Health risks: the position of the doctors on the North Shore

Some points taken from the brief presented to the National Assembly in May 2010:

IMPACT ON HEALTH...

- EVALUATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SURROUNDING POPULATIONS 17
- RADIONUCLIDES IN THE RESIDUE OF A URANIUM MINE
- URANIUM-238 18
- RADON-222 21
- RADIUM-226..... 23
- POLONIUM 24

Conclusion : **We therefore demand an immediate moratorium on uranium mining across the entire province of Quebec**

Environmental risks

In the watershed of the Restigouche River

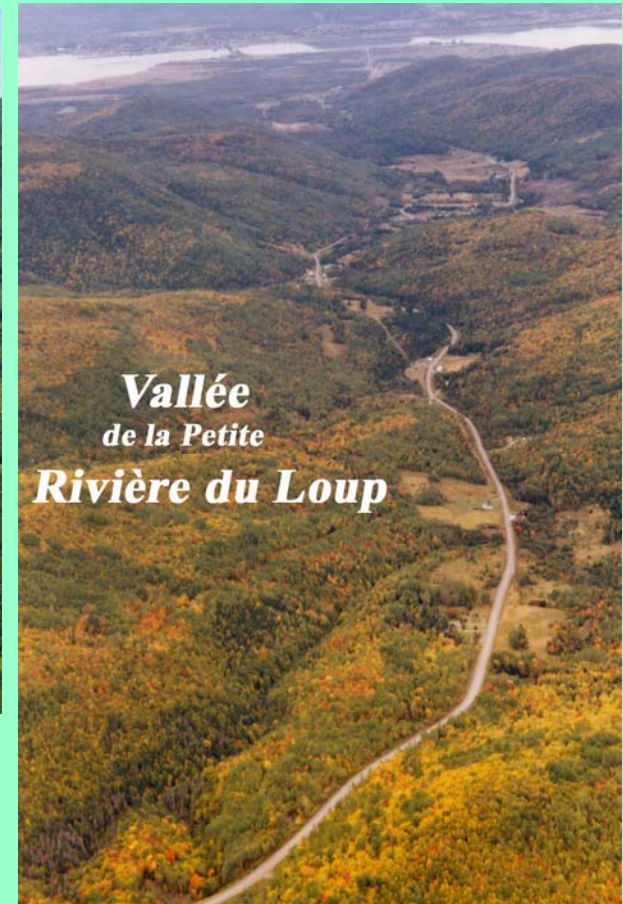


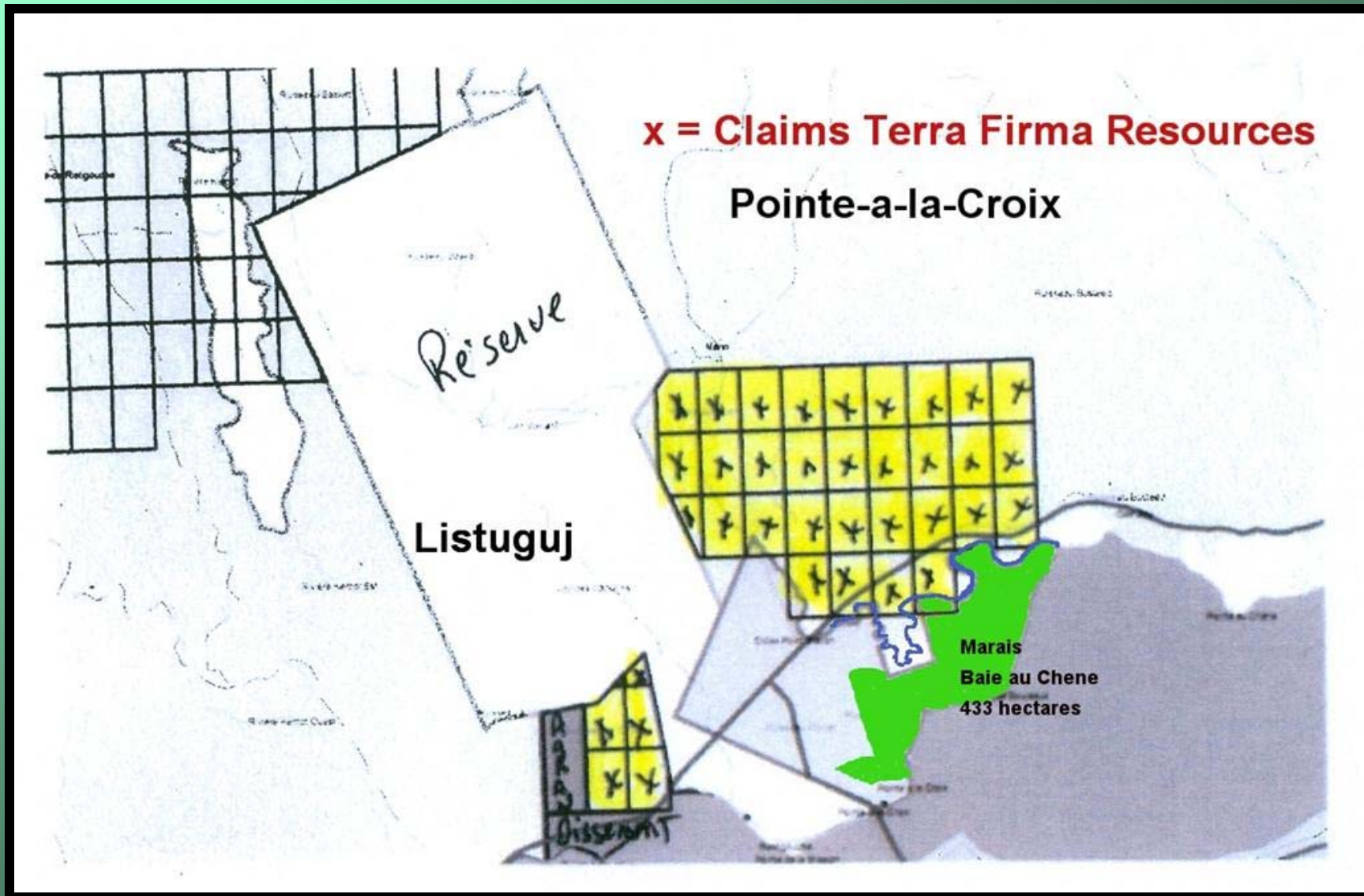
Cross Point Block

Environmental risks to the Oak Bay saltwater marsh



Mann Block





Conflict of mining with current usage

(example: tourism, agriculture, residential development, etc)



An apple orchard in the valley of the Petite-Rivière-du-Loup

Quebec is at the head of the line for its complaisant attitude to mining

- ❑ It's an “open bar” for prospecting companies in Quebec
 - No environmental evaluation during the prospecting phase
 - No permission required from landowners, municipalities or First Nations
 - No prior testing done on drinking water, wells or vulnerable species

- ❑ The Mining Act is based on “free mining”: The Quebec law is clear «Nobody may forbid, or make difficult, access to land containing mineral substances, which form part of the domain of the State, to those who have the right to a claim or to prospecting on the site, if this latter identifies himself and shows his permit. »

- ❑ Worse, Crown Lands are wide open to mineral exploration.

The attitude of the Charest government

- A categorical and definite refusal:

May 4th 2010 response from Nathalie Normandeau to the petition presented by Amir Khadir and supported by 4,327 signatures

Enfin, en ce qui a trait aux activités d'exploration et d'exploitation de l'uranium, celles-ci sont soumises à une série de réglementations, de loi et de contrôles stricts, tant fédéraux que provinciaux. Ces derniers régissent la réalisation des travaux et le développement minier éventuel ainsi que la restauration des sites, dans le respect de l'environnement et des communautés et en consultation avec elles.



NATHALIE NORMANDEAU

Is this socially acceptable ?

- « ... while respecting communities and consulting with them » says Nathalie Normandeau

HOWEVER,

- Several municipalites and MRCs in Quebec and 15,300 individuals have requested by petition (3) to the National Assembly and to the Minister of Natural Resources, Nathalie Normandeau, to ban uranium mining in Quebec

And they have received a categorical refusal!

- A large number of doctors in the North Shore have also requested a moratorium: **Refused!**
- In Canada the **British Columbia** Medical Association has come out against this industry and that same province, along with **Nova Scotia**, have already declared moratoriums.
- This project to search for uranium in the Minister's own riding is being planned without information, consultation, and especially, without the approval of the citizens.

We have to lobby the Minister of Natural Resources
for the sake of all Quebecers!

Quebec must protect all its citizens!

It's an urgent matter...

- ❑ Several junior mining companies are now at work in Quebec, at least one in Bonaventure County
- ❑ The current Mining Act is outdated and anti-democratic, but the government's planned revisions are only superficial



The big picture !

- ❑ To this date, more than 290 municipalities and MRCs representing **719,864 people** have adopted resolutions addressed to the government and to Mme Nathalie Normandeau, demanding a ban on uranium mining in Quebec (source: Mouvement **Sortons le Québec du Nucléaire**)
- ❑ To date in the Gaspé, 14 municipalities (including 5 in Bonaventure MRC) representing **30,200** people have adopted similar resolutions. (L'Ascension, Matapédia, Pointe-à-la-Croix, Carleton-sur-Mer and Hope)
- ❑ The demands of the elected representatives include:
 - ❑ Cancel the current project to reconstruct the Gentilly-2 nuclear reactor;
 - ❑ **Declare a moratorium on any further exploration for, or mining of uranium in the province of Quebec, as Nova Scotia has done recently.**

Why are municipalities against uranium?

The future of the nuclear industry in Quebec: « A societal choice »

- Given that the different phases of nuclear energy development, as well as the management of the radioactive waste that this generates, carries risks for irreparable damage to natural ecosystems and to human health;
- Given that exploring for, mining, and enriching uranium carries grave risks for ecosystems, the water table, public health; and that it contributes to the arms race;
- Given that uranium is not a renewable resource and that this combustible material, in reactors such as Gentilly-2, results in highly radioactive waste that must be prevented from contaminating humans and the environment for hundreds of thousands of years

(source: Resolution sent to municipalities by the Mayor of 'Amqui, Gaétan Ruest)

Uranium prospecting
in our region?

STOP it, or bring it on?

