

Dear Minister Churchill,

This message is to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you today, and to outline the outcomes of the meeting from the perspective of the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association (SMBSA).

First, we are encouraged to know that the Department of Natural Resources intends to develop a consultative process for the management of the Western Crown Lands which will truly reflect the values of "Collaboration", "Transparency" and "Informed Decision Making" that are articulated in the Action Plan for the Natural Resources Strategy. You have indicated that Patricia MacNeil will contact Geoff Le Boutillier to obtain his thoughts on how the next phase of collaboration will be designed and implemented. We also learned today that there is a DNR management plan for the St. Margaret's Bay area of the Western Crown Lands that has been drafted and we requested that a copy of this plan be forwarded to us.

Second, we commend the DNR for taking the immediate step of establishing a notification registry for individual citizens and stakeholder groups to proactively receive notice of crown land allocation decisions. SMBSA wishes to be included in this registry, and we will actively play a role in disseminating information on how others can sign on.

Third, we appreciated that you and the DNR representatives at the meeting today listened to the case we made for the re-consideration of clearcut harvesting of the three lots in proximity to the Ingram River. The concerns we raised were the significant negative impact that clearcut harvesting in this specific location will have on four key areas of the planning values identified in the "Conceptual Plan for Western Nova Scotia":

- 1) Conservation of biodiversity (species, habitat, ecosystem protection, ecosystem goods and services, land and water connectivity)
- 2) Historical and cultural (archeological, special places, cultural sites)
- 3) Recreation (land and water-based recreation, hiking, fishing, hunting, trapping, recreational berry picking, nature appreciation and exploration)
- 4) Tourism (public touring, scenic views capes, nature based tourism, coastal areas, tourism business)

We presented to you our firm conviction that the residents of the St. Margaret's Bay area are in agreement with us that these four planning values supersede the limited and short term interests of the single planning value of Forestry (forest management and industry support) that is driving the proposed harvesting. The many letters and email messages you have received from individuals and organizations, and the more than 1,000 signatures on the web based petition initiated by Helga Guderley on change.org <<http://change.org>> testify to this agreement.

Minister Churchill, you stated that the Ingram River lots were identified based on the evidence and criteria used by DNR to assess suitability, and we have requested that the pre-treatment assessment be forwarded to us in the interests of transparency.

You also promised that you would give consideration to our feedback, and any further information citizens and organizations can give to you regarding potential negative environmental and other impacts. You also said that your final decision will be made in the very

near future.

Mr. Minister, today you confirmed your personal commitment to uphold the Natural Resources Strategy that states “We are seeking a transformation; change based on relationships, trust, accountability, and shared stewardship with everyone who cares about Nova Scotia’s natural resources” (p. 5). Please do not betray the trust of the people of St. Margaret’s Bay by making a hasty decision regarding the Ingram River lots. We urge you to delay the decision on these three lots until a truly proactive consultative process is in place.

Until then, we recommend that clearcut harvesting proceed in areas of the Western Crown Lands which are not a) in close proximity to a highly populated area of residents who are passionate about the place they have chosen to live, b) in a river valley vulnerable to erosion, c) surrounding an estuary with fishery resources vulnerable to siltation, and c) along a recreational trail system poised to become a world class tourist attraction with a multitude of economic development benefits.

We will continue to encourage citizens to submit their feedback on the Ingram River area harvesting directly to you. And we look forward to receiving communication on your determination of the course of action that the Department of Natural Resources will take so that this information can be shared throughout the communities of St. Margaret’s Bay.

Sincerely,

Cathy Crouse, Chair
St. Margaret’s Bay Stewardship Association