

12 February 2015

Minister Churchill,

I am writing for a second time to express my concern about the potential decision to clear-cut three lots near the Ingram River on the former Bowater Mersey lands. Such a decision would be shortsighted and not reflect the interests of Nova Scotians, and in particular to the residents of the Halifax area. This has been a particularly hot topic and concern for people in my community. Whereas there were people on both sides of the question of where to place the new connector, I have not met a single person who is in favor of clear cutting this area.

As has been stated by many people, the motivation to clear-cut this area seems to be based solely on a forest use prospective. These lands can provide benefits that will outweigh any short-term monetary gain from clear cutting.

The recreational potential of these lands is extremely alluring. These lands have been used by local residents for years and include historical remnants of the "Old Chester Road" and interesting abandoned farms. Many of the youth of the area identify with the hiking, rock climbing, fishing and camping adventures they had have had on these lands. Now that the communities on the Bay are virtually part of the city Halifax (most non-retired residents on the Bay work in the city, and the Bay is probably the most used escape for city residents), the recreational use of these lands can be much greater. Having high-quality recreational areas near by is what can make a city a "cool" place to live (Vancouver for example).

The forests near the Ingram River are of particular interest in terms of potential recreational, tourism and educational **benefits because this area has not been logged for many years** (perhaps 100 years). It is an example of a relatively mature ecosystem near the Bay, including forests draining into a relatively pristine watershed -probably the last one. Most of the slopes and summits overlooking the Bay have been harvested during the past 10-20 years, and the scars from these cuts are certainly visible. Thus, it is important to maintain this example of the type of forest that can develop along the Bay. Forest regeneration in our area is a slow process. I have spent my professional life as an ecologist and University professor,

and have noted there has not been a successful conifer recruitment event over the past 4 years in large openings in the forest at Boutiliers Point (empirical evidence). Once seedlings appear it will take at least 4-6 years for the trees to attain 1 foot in height. It will take 60-100 years before full-grown trees reappear -and this is still not a climax forest, ecologically speaking.

I am part of the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association and I am sure that our organization (and likely others, ex. Rails to Trails, Safety minded ATV association) would be keen to work at increasing the use of these forests for recreation, education and tourism. Rails to Trails are working at the Rum Runners trail to make the area between Halifax and Lunenburg a world-class tourist destination (how about a stop at the Ingram watershed?). We could contribute to these projects through community fund raising, such as our recent highly successful *Bay Treasure Chest* initiative. This would be a great way to bring the community together, and to enhance the enthusiasm of people for this special place in the world!
Sincerely,

John Himmelman, Ph.D.