

February 13th, 2015

Dear Minister Churchill,

Hello again! You and the weighty decision that faces you have been very much on my mind this past week. I do not envy you your position, and I sincerely appreciate the time you are taking to consider the ramifications of this decision.

In my analysis of the situation and the factors that are seen to favor clear cutting the lots in the Ingram valley, proximity to the Rails to Trails is central. Effectively, having the trail as a means of hauling logs out during a period when secondary roads are closed seems a central reason why these lots have been targeted. But this proximity to the Rails to Trails (and by extension the Bay communities) is exactly why the community is so upset about this clear cut. The Rails to Trails is a ribbon that unites the communities along St. Margaret's Bay, it is a conduit for visitors from central Halifax and from afar. Facing these visitors, and those that travel along the coast by car, with the moonscape of clear cut hillsides sends the signal that the province does not care about conservation of environmental quality. Clear cutting has many ecological consequences, decreases recreational value, impacts adjoining lands and bodies of water as well as discouraging local communities that are faced with the destruction of lands they enjoy and have appreciated as long as they have lived or visited the area. Although the mature forests on these make them interesting for lumber mills, the recreational, touristic, cultural and aesthetic value of older forests located near vibrant communities weighs strongly against clear cutting.

I have been copied on many very well argued letters opposing the clear cuts, with scientific viewpoints ranging from oceanographic to limnological, to botanical and zoological, with social perspectives including the recreational, touristic and community aspects. The Nova Scotia trail system (to which the St. Margaret's Bay Rails to Trails belongs) has today benefitted from an infusion of federal money, encouraging those who want to develop this asset as a means to stimulate Our New Economy. Outside of the meeting room on Wednesday morning, I have not encountered a single person in favor of these clear cuts. This issue is very close to the hearts and minds of many people, I hope that your decision will prevent the wide spread outrage that would arise if clear cutting is allowed on these lands.

Thanks again for taking the time to weigh these many considerations. I truly appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Helga Guderley, PhD

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