

A Brief Response to Bill 4, Nova Scotia
April 2021

I grew up on the Lahave River and as a child and watched the ospreys suffer from DDT. I also watched the seaweed disappear due to affluent and sewage destroying the water quality and salinity levels. As a young person, we fished large codfish for personal use. Salmon travelled the Lahave waterway and many of our lakes had large trout populations. (Much of the pollution along our "Rhine of North America" has been highlighted by the work of Stella Bowles and Co.) Our waterways are precious, yet development along them defies logic. Infilling of water edges and marshes seems to continue unchecked at a break neck pace. We have watched the development of the lakes that surround us and what has happened to the water quality and many of the marshes along them is disgraceful....yet it continues. Old camps with limited septic systems are being turned into modern homes with the amenities that result...why are they not required to install proper septic systems when a building permit is issued? It is hard to comprehend the toll human interaction exacts on Mother Nature.

On the other hand, I have witnessed vague, over reaching legislation take a toll on private landowners who do not have the resources to contest the action. When reading the supporting articles for the bill, the focus appears to be on clearcutting. The local news reported that the protest leader in our area addressed clearcutting. Yet, when I try to work my way through the written bill, its scope seems to be far more reaching than that. It makes me leery of the intention and implementation of the legislation.

We make our home on approximately 200 acres of land, parts of which have been in the family since the 1930's. There is about 6 acres of cleared land and the remainder was put under a forestry management plan in the late 1970's which has produced a healthy mixed wood forest. During these decades, riparian waterways have been respected and wildlife corridors developed. We have selectively cut to improve the genetic quality of trees in our woodlot and we are willing to learn more regarding good stewardship of our property. People are welcome to walk, ski or peddle a bike, but motorized vehicles are not welcome. The only unnatural damage that has occurred on our property has been as a result of OHV's cutting trails wide enough for the side by sides and blazing red paint to mark the trail. Sadly, the mindset of so many OHV drivers is if private property is interrupting their route, or as soon as they see a trail, they take full advantage causing many of us to absolutely restrain from giving permission to the respectful drivers. The erosion that has occurred is annoying to say the least and the noise pollution is most aggravating. We are frequently unable to have peaceful enjoyment of our land and have been decades combating this trespass.

In keeping with environmental practices that are critically needed, I can appreciate the push for clean energy. To reduce our fuel consumption, we replaced our oil furnace with a heat pump last year. Yet, the amount of fossil fuel used for watersports and OHV's is a major contributor to fossil fuel consumption. The incredible volume of boat activity threatens wildlife, yet that remains unchecked. The hobby of "mudding" with OHV's of all types damages habitat. Where is the check on those activities? Last year our neighbourhood was alive with song birds...possibly due to the quiet that ensued as a result of Covid. As the noise levels return to the pre-pandemic levels, the birds are not as cheerful this year.

I am not against protecting habitat to sustain biodiversity...in fact, I am pro habitat protection, including limited clear cutting. What I am opposed to is sweeping legislation that can be manipulated by far reaching advocates that do not own the land.

My initial thoughts on the bill that addresses biodiversity are: attention should first deal with Crown land, government parks, the issuance of development and building permits along sensitive waterways and other habitats as well as reliable enforcement. If there is vital habitat at risk, maybe the governments could team up with the Nature Conservatory and buy the land at a fair price. Lead by example.