



Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
Nova Scotia Chapter
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Re: Bill 57 comments to Law Amendments Committee

October 29, 2021

To: Law Amendments Committee

Hello.

My name is Caitlin Grady.

I'm a Conservation Campaigner with the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-NS).

Thank you for the opportunity to present at Law Amendments Committee today.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is a national charity that works to protect natural areas in Canada. In Nova Scotia, we work exclusively on the establishment of new protected areas. We work collaboratively with all levels of government to protect places such as Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, Sable Island, and the St. Mary's River, to name a few examples.

We are a grassroots, science-based conservation organization that maintains expertise specifically on land protection issues. For that reason, our comments today deal specifically with the "land protection" portions of Bill 57.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is pleased to see the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act (EGCCRA) come forward. We participated in the review of the

Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) when that piece of legislation was introduced in 2007.

At that time, EGSPA was fairly unusual in that it addressed many different environmental issues within a single piece of legislation, setting clear targets and timelines for the Nova Scotia government to meet. Over a decade later, the legislation has, for the most part, proved successful. It has held successive governments accountable on numerous environmental issues that operate on timeframes beyond the normal election cycle.

The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act builds off of this successful legacy. We are pleased to see Bill 57 - a piece of legislation similar to EGSPA with many targets and timelines on multiple environmental issues - coming forward to carry on the tradition.

Clause 10 deals specifically with the land protection goal.

We want to acknowledge that Clause 10 mentions Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) specifically. That is an improvement over the previous versions of this legislation.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is pleased that the land protection goal is being re-established as a legislated target rather than a policy target. When EGSPA was repealed in 2019, the protected areas target was downgraded from legislated protection to policy protection, which was a step in the wrong direction. We are glad to see that decision being reversed.

We are also pleased that the land protection goal for Nova Scotia is being increased to “at least 20%” of the total land and water mass of the province by 2030, up from the previous policy target of 14% protection. Our natural ecosystems are under immense pressure from industry, through rampant clearcutting and extensive mineral exploration. More protected areas are needed to stem biodiversity loss, to provide better habitat protection, to clean the air and water, to provide places for outdoor recreation and enjoyment, and to store carbon in the fight against climate change.

The higher target is welcome. We also acknowledge that the target specifies “at least” 20% protection. Indeed, this target is a floor, not a ceiling, and there is room for Nova Scotia to exceed 20% protection. The national target for Canada is 25% protection by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Recently, all G7 Nations passed a unanimous motion setting a protected areas target of 30% by 2030. Nova Scotia must continue to scale up its conservation ambition to confront the climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis head on.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is recommending several specific amendments to strengthen the land protection portion of Bill 57.

At the moment, there are currently about 150 pending protected areas that have been identified by the Nova Scotia government for protection but have yet to receive a legal designation. These sites are contained in the “Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan”

and have already gone through multiple rounds of public consultation. Clause 10 should be amended to state that the “Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan” will be fully implemented no later than June 30th, 2022. This is more than enough time to complete the designation process for these pending sites, since all that is required is an Order-in-Council.

We also recommend that Clause 10 be amended to require annual progress reports on achieving the land protection target. It’s imperative that the Nova Scotia government not wait until just before the 2030 deadline to achieve this goal. Progress establishing new protected areas is needed every year. There is no time to waste. The climate change portion of this bill has a similar requirement for an annual progress report specific on that environmental issue.

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society also recommends amending Clause 10 to specifically state that a collaborative protected areas plan will be released no later than December 31, 2024. The current wording states that a collaborative protected areas strategy will be produced, which, while a good first step, does not go far enough. A collaborative protected areas plan is needed to identify specific sites that are advanced toward legal protection. This is a crucial step in achieving a higher land protection target and, as such, should be written into the legislation.

We would also like to draw your attention to Clause 4. It rightly states that climate change is recognized as a global emergency, but it makes no mention of the second ongoing crisis of rapid biodiversity loss. The two are unquestionably linked and the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act should recognize this reality. We recommend amending Clause 4 to state “Climate change *and the biodiversity crisis* are recognized as global emergencies requiring urgent action”.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our analysis. Our proposed amendments are presented as helpful recommendations for improving the legislation and we hope that they will be added to Bill 57 by this committee.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you.



Caitlin Grady
Conservation Campaigner
CPAWS Nova Scotia

Specific proposed amendments to Bill 57 (Clauses 4 and 10)

Clause 4

Current wording:

4(c) climate change is recognized as a global emergency requiring urgent action; and

Recommended amendment:

4(c) climate change and the biodiversity crisis are recognized as global emergencies requiring urgent action; and

Clause 10

Current wording:

10 The Government's goals with respect to the protection of land are

(a) to conserve at least 20% of the total land and water mass of the Province by 2030 as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, in a manner consistent with national reporting criteria;

(b) to support the goal in clause (a) with a collaborative protected areas strategy to be released by December 31, 2023;

Recommended amendment:

10 The Government's goals with respect to the protection of land are

(a) to conserve at least 20% of the total land and water mass of the Province by 2030 as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, in a manner consistent with national reporting criteria;

(b) to support the goal in clause (a) by fully implementing the existing Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan no later than June 30, 2022; by developing a collaborative protected areas strategy to be released no later than December 31, 2023; by completing a collaborative protected areas plan to be released no later than December 31, 2024; and by releasing annual progress reports on achieving the protected areas target.