

Re: Submission to Bills Committee on Nova Scotia Bill 127 – Section II

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing regarding Section II of Bill 127, presented under the claim of “protecting Nova Scotians.”

My first concern is with the undemocratic process by which this omnibus bill has been advanced. Bundling together a wide range of issues and pushing them forward without meaningful consultation prevents Nova Scotians—including Mi’kmaq rights holders, experts, and community members—from having our voices heard. A government committed to accountability and respect for its people would take the time to separate these matters and ensure full public input before moving ahead.

While some aspects of the Bill may be constructive, the amendments to the Crown Lands Act in Section II are deeply troubling. These changes do not safeguard our communities; instead, they expand the powers of the Crown to criminalize those who act to protect the land and water. The effect of Section II is to prioritize short-term economic gain over the long-term health and safety of people and ecosystems.

We have already seen this government approve the spraying of glyphosate—a substance known to endanger human health—on forests across this province. Under Section II, those who speak out or stand against such harmful practices could face punishment. The same applies to people resisting destructive forestry operations that threaten species-at-risk and vital habitats. Most alarming is that this legislation could be used to further criminalize Mi’kmaq land defenders acting on unceded lands, in direct contradiction to treaty responsibilities and Indigenous sovereignty.

Mi’kmaq land defenders on Hunters Mountain are not criminals; they are caretakers, stepping in where government mismanagement has endangered the land. They are working for the wellbeing of generations yet to come. I am grateful for their courage and clarity.

Section II represents both an erosion of democracy and a betrayal of our obligations to the land, to our children, and to reconciliation. I call on the Committee to reject Section II of Bill 127, and to commit instead to legislation that truly protects communities, honours treaty relationships, and safeguards the living land upon which we all depend.

Sincerely,
Riley Olstead