

To the Office of the Legislative Counsel,

I am writing to provide my comments on **Bill 127 – Protecting Nova Scotians Act**, and I ask that these comments be directed to the **Public Bills Committee** for their consideration.

While I recognize that Bill 127 contains several positive elements, I am very concerned about the provisions that would make it unlawful to “block, obstruct, or impede access” to forest access roads and Crown lands. These changes risk undermining fundamental democratic rights in Nova Scotia.

My concerns are as follows:

- **Freedom of expression and protest:** Peaceful protest on Crown land, including on forest access roads, is a long-standing and legitimate way for citizens to express dissent and draw attention to issues such as forestry practices and environmental stewardship. Criminalizing such actions risks suppressing public participation and silencing important voices.
- **Overbroad and vague language:** Terms like “block,” “obstruct,” or “impede” can be interpreted very broadly. Without precise definitions, there is a risk of overreach, where peaceful assemblies, sit-ins, or symbolic acts could all be targeted as unlawful.
- **Lack of safeguards or exemptions:** The Bill does not appear to provide protections for peaceful protest, Indigenous land rights, or other legitimate public interest actions. This raises the possibility of enforcement being applied too broadly and unfairly.
- **Chilling effect on democratic participation:** Even if charges are not laid, the threat of prosecution could deter Nova Scotians from participating in lawful protest and public advocacy. That would be a setback for democracy and accountability in this province.
- **Conflict with public oversight of environmental decision-making:** Protests and demonstrations often serve as a critical check on government and industry activity in remote areas. Limiting this tool of public oversight could reduce transparency and weaken environmental accountability.

Nova Scotians value both safety and democratic rights. While I understand the intent to protect access and safety on Crown land, the provisions in Bill 127 as drafted, go too far. They risk infringing on rights to peaceful assembly and expression, and they create unnecessary barriers to public participation in environmental and land-use debates.

I respectfully urge the Public Bills Committee to reconsider these clauses, narrow their scope, and ensure that Bill 127 does not erode the fundamental rights of Nova Scotians to peacefully assemble, protest, and hold government accountable.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Chad Simmons