

To the Law Amendments Committee

Re: Bill 213, Sustainable Development Goals Act

October 28th, 2019

Hello,

My name is Jen Hall, and I am a resident of Halifax. I am writing to express some concerns I have about Bill 213, the Sustainable Development Goals Act, as it currently stands.

Section 2 (a): The definition of “circular economy” used in this Bill falls short of the more generally accepted meaning of the term, in my view. The term ‘circular economy’ originated in the 1970s and has been popularized by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and numerous academics. It is generally taken to mean an economy which relies on closed-loop manufacturing systems, which minimize both the inputs of resources and outputs of waste by taking the waste products from one system and using them as food for another. The idea of the circular economy exists in opposition to the linear economic model where resources are harvested, consumed in the making of products, and then thrown ‘away’ at the end of their lifespan. The definition used in this Bill does not include any mention of closed-loop systems or the reuse of waste products as resources for other systems. Instead, it focuses on extracting the maximum value from all resources used, which, while laudable, is still in line with the linear economic model that we have now. In a true circular economic model, the waste from a particular product is foreseen and factored into the design of a system of production at the beginning; waste is not a byproduct that needs to be investigated for recoverable resources, but an integral part of the system.

2 (h) The definition of ‘sustainable prosperity’ sounds very nice, but there is an increasing body of evidence suggesting that continued economic growth is not sustainable, and is in fact responsible for a lot of greenhouse gas emissions. I am concerned that the focus on ‘economic growth’ will, again, trump efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, as the actions that we have to take in order to reduce our carbon emissions will inevitably have economic impacts. I personally would like to see the language of ‘economic growth’ removed from this Bill if possible. For this reason, I am skeptical of the long-term objective for the province set out in 5 (1).

4 (a) It is lovely to see the Mi’kmaq concept of Netukulimk included in this Bill. However, I am deeply concerned by the fact that this Bill makes no mention of respecting Indigenous rights and sovereignty, which are integral parts of addressing the climate crisis and creating an ‘inclusive economy’. The closure of Alton Gas, and the closure of Boat Harbour are two concrete steps the government could take to reduce Nova Scotia’s environmental impact while also supporting the well-being and prosperity of the Mi’kmaq. I am concerned that this Bill and this government will pay lip service to Mi’kmaq knowledge and presence by including this concept, while simultaneously failing to respect their rights and sovereignty.

5 (2) In my view, the actions proposed by the government towards achieving ‘sustainable prosperity’ are insufficient and fail to address the severity of the crisis that we face. “Raising awareness”, “programs”, and “initiatives” to “encourage” Nova Scotians to make progress towards sustainable prosperity are a waste of time if we do not successfully cut our greenhouse gas emissions. I am disappointed that the

government does not have more concrete plans of action to suggest, and I am disappointed that the government is still focused on raising awareness of this issue when the time for that has long since passed.

7 (a) (b) (c) The greenhouse gas reduction targets proposed in this act are (as I'm sure you will hear from many other people) insufficient. The EAC recommends a reduction of GHGs of 50% below 1990 levels, or 58% below 2005 levels, which will give us the best chance of keeping global heating to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

I am also deeply concerned by the fact that there is no plan indicating how we will reduce emissions. There is a plan in this Bill to promote 'sustainable prosperity', vague as it may be, but our number one priority needs to be reducing GHG emissions, and fast. The IPCC report argues that the largest cuts to our emissions need to happen as fast as possible, and any legislation made by this government needs to reflect this fact. I would love to see a plan for the next decade (which is all the time we have left to avert catastrophic global heating) with yearly targets for reductions in emissions. For this reason, I do not believe that annual reports by the Minister to the House, as explained in 12 (1), are anywhere near sufficient. The pace of the changes we need to make is such that monthly reports would be more appropriate, if not weekly.

Please understand that I am writing as a young person (I'm 25) whose life will be deeply impacted by the decisions we make now. I have been watching governments fail to adequately address climate change for my entire life, and I am very frustrated by the lack of understanding and inaction that is endemic in government around this issue. This may be the most important bill passed in this sitting of the Legislature, and I implore you to open yourselves to feedback from the public and take the time to get this right. We can no longer avoid doing what must be done.

Thank you,

Jen Hall