

March 18, 2021

Dear Law Amendments Committee, Minister Delorey, and Minister Porter,

I was disappointed to read the recent Biodiversity Act - Bill 4 and learn of the overreaching powers that this Act would empower the Minister of Lands and Forestry with should it be passed in its current state. The regulations surrounding this Act are not presented, but it would suggest that this will have serious consequences to Nova Scotia's Agriculture Industry, as well as other industries and individuals who are private land owners. In the absence of accompanying regulations, it is still very obvious that the Minister of Lands and Forestry will have broad discretion to determine what happens to the majority of Nova Scotia's farm land.

As a university student, months away from graduating in Dairy Business Management, from Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture, I am concerned about how this affects my future, as well as the future of Nova Scotians. My goal is to become a farm owner, and continue a family tradition of producing food for our province. My university courses have taught me the importance of biodiversity and environmental management. But more important, living on a farm for 20 years that has allowed me to see first hand current farmers approaching their management decisions with a reflection on sustainability, environmental awareness, and biodiversity. Farmers pride themselves on being stewards of the land. This Act suggests that the current government, and those that wrote the Act, believe otherwise. As Nova Scotians who understand the importance of caring for the land, and reinvesting in the resources that provide our livelihood and your food supply, farmers are well aware of the significance of biodiversity to our future. Furthermore, they operate their farm businesses in a manner that demonstrates such collaboratively with numerous government departments and organizations with a mandate to protect and enhance our natural environments.

I encourage you to reconsider the far-reaching power this Act places on the Minister, and the consequences it will have to our agriculture community. It is my goal to farm in a manner that reflects the importance of biodiversity and environmental stewardship, but my success in producing food for Nova Scotians will depend on being able to do so without undue hardship or interference from government. As a young Nova Scotian looking to become a private land owner and successful farm operator producing food in a sustainable manner, I ask that the Law Amendments Committee as well MLAs in the province, apply this Act to Crown Lands only. I would also recommend that any regulations relating to this Bill and Act are collaboratively written with wide reaching public input, especially with the private land owners of this province.

Sincerely,

Shamus Thomson
Antigonish, Nova Scotia

