

Office of the Legislative Counsel  
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Halifax NS B3J 2X1

To the Law Amendments Committee,

**Re: Bill 4, The Biodiversity Act**

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council to confirm our support for Bill 4. The International Union for Conservation of Nature states that invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss. Preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species is the priority for invasive species management practices. Invasive species are causing harm to Nova Scotian ecosystems and Species at Risk. Invasive species also pose a range of socioeconomic threats along with significant environmental problems. The annual cumulative lost revenue from just 16 invasive species in Canada is estimated at \$13-35 billion with additional damages to the agricultural and forestry sectors estimated at \$.5 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, a brand of aquarium moss balls sold in North America was found to be contaminated with zebra mussels, an invasive mussel that has serious ecological and economical implications. Zebra mussels were first confirmed in these moss balls in the United States and then made their way to Canada, where they were eventually confirmed in aquarium stores here in Nova Scotia. Zebra mussels are not yet present in Nova Scotia waters; elsewhere they are known to degrade ecosystems by reducing native biodiversity. They pose a serious threat to aquatic Species at Risk such as the brook floater and the yellow lampmussel, they clog pipes and affect water treatment facilities, and they reduce recreational opportunities as well. In Ontario, municipalities are spending \$4 million per year to manage zebra mussels. As damaging as zebra mussels can be, there is no legislation that can currently control the importation of contaminated moss balls into our province, or subsequently prevent the introduction of this invasive mussel into our waters.

There is a huge gap in regulating the pet and aquarium trade, and zebra mussels are unfortunately not the only problem. Frog Pond in HRM is experiencing an ecosystem crash due to the introduction of the invasive plant fanwort, which was likely brought in from the aquarium trade. It is now at the point where recreational activities in this lake have been significantly reduced, as you can no longer swim in these waters and it is becoming more difficult to canoe or kayak through the vast patches of this weed-like plant. We have over 3000 lakes in Nova Scotia, but there is currently nothing in place to prevent the introduction and control the spread of invasive species with current regulations.

1. <https://canadainvasives.ca/invasive-species/>

It is not just our waters that are at risk; many terrestrial invasive species are poised to have devastating impacts on biodiversity as well if we do not improve legislation. Hemlock woolly adelgid and emerald ash borer are two high profile invasive insects that threaten our forests. These forest pests kill trees very quickly, destroying habitats that many species rely on for survival.

Due to the geology in Nova Scotia, there are many diverse habitats. With climate change, we will see a lot of these habitats become ideal for new invasive species. In addition, Halifax is a major port in Canada and will be a point of introduction for invasive species; with little to no regulations on the importation or management of invasive species in Nova Scotia, we could end up allowing invasive species to proliferate and spread across the province.

Bill 4 and associated invasive species regulations will support the development of prevention and management programs for invasive species. We need more resources for research, education, and monitoring to assess the impacts and create awareness of invasive species in our province, which is why the Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council supports this Bill and is willing to assist in the implementation.

Thank you for taking the time to read our statement, we appreciate your consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kristen Noel".

Kristen Noel, Project Coordinator

Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council