

Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the Biodiversity Act. I'm writing as an individual, as a board member of the Eastern Shore Forest Watch Association (a volunteer position), and a fifth-generation woodlot owner.

I'm turning 30 next month. Even within my lifetime, I've noticed a distressing decline in birds, other wildlife, plants, and insects.

To an extent, we've become desensitized to this loss. So, I'd like to share some examples that stand out to me. I remember the magic of watching fireflies as a kid. Sadly, I haven't seen any in years.

I used to love falling asleep to a chorus of frogs and crickets. Now, I fall asleep to a recording of frogs through an app on my smartphone.

I also remember what a pain it was to have to stop and clean dead bugs off the windshield on road trips. But I'd gladly do that chore today if it meant that our ecosystems were starting to recover.

The truth is, biodiversity is in peril. Nature is declining at rates never before seen in human history, which makes it hard for us to comprehend. A landmark report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has shown that "grave impacts on people around the world [are] now likely" as a result of the biodiversity crisis. We're already seeing serious repercussions of our broken relationship with nature. (A grim but timely example is the Covid-19 pandemic).

Not only is the sixth mass extinction an ongoing extinction event, but the rate of species extinction is also accelerating. The Center for Biological Diversity reports, "The current rate of extinction of species is estimated at 100 to 1,000 times higher than natural background rates."

We've lost 60% of the planet's wildlife in less than 50 years, according to the World Wildlife Fund's 2020 Living Planet Report.

Our remaining wildlife is in trouble. The UN warns, "Around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history."

It's okay if you don't remember these statistics. But I hope you do remember this:

Biodiversity loss is a *global crisis* that's enacted *locally*.

*We* are enabling this crisis.

Sir Robert Watson, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), says that "it is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start now at every level from local to global."

Our current conservation efforts are failing to adequately protect threatened species and their habitats. World Wildlife Fund's "Living Planet Report Canada 2020" revealed that populations of Canadian species that are of global conservation concern have declined

(in Canada) by an average of 42% between 1970 and 2016. Populations of Canadian species that are of national conservation concern have declined by an average of 59% between 1970 and 2016.

Biodiversity loss isn't restricted to species that are legally defined as endangered. Even once-common species have suffered staggering declines.

As a fifth-generation woodlot owner, I understand that responsible stewardship is both a right and a responsibility.

It is our collective responsibility to start treating biodiversity loss like the crisis it is.

We need to start by passing a strong Biodiversity Act in order to preserve biodiversity on public and private land. The Act should work to conserve both terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

I feel it's imperative that the Biodiversity Emergency Orders are re-introduced, in order to deal with acute threats (such as invasive species) when they occur on private land.

I'm extremely disappointed that the government has significantly weakened its own Legislation. The revised Act, as distributed a few hours ago, eliminated 10 pages straight of a 20-page document. We need a Biodiversity Act with enforcement mechanisms. It's imperative that the Biodiversity Emergency Orders are re-introduced, in order to deal with acute threats (such as invasive species) when they occur on private land.

After all, Crown Land only makes up approximately 30% of our province, and that percentage is fragmented across the province.

Projections from Dr. Karen Beazley of Dalhousie University show that we need to manage approximately ~60-65% of the province's landmass for biodiversity conservation objectives. That figure is consistent with other studies that determine what is needed to maintain native biodiversity over time.

From the air we breathe, to the water we drink, biodiversity is critical to human survival. The more biodiverse our province and our planet are, the more resilient they will be to weather disturbances, disease, and climate change.

We all have a responsibility to do better, for this generation, and the generations that follow.

I want my niece and nephew to have the opportunity to be enchanted by fireflies, lulled to sleep by real frogs croaking, and annoyed by bugs on the windshield.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Lee