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London, Ont.
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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing regarding the planned property tax increase for non-resident property owners in Nova Scotia. I have many issues with this tax which feels discriminatory and unnecessarily steep.

While I am a resident from Ontario, my family has a long history of living in Nova Scotia. My father was a LeBlanc descended from Daniel LeBlanc, one of the original Acadian settlers in Nova Scotia. My parents both grew up in Springhill Nova Scotia where my dad worked in the coal mine until he went overseas to fight in WWII. After the war he moved to Aylmer, Ontario where my brother and I grew up. Leaving the coal mine possibly saved his life. It was not a safe place to work and we lost several relatives in the Explosion and the Bump. Though my parents had moved away, every vacation we took was to Springhill where we could visit family. During those vacations Dad and I travelled to every part of Nova Scotia and looked forward to a time when we could spend more time there.

After I married and began a family, my parents bought a rustic cottage in Northport, a thirty-five minute drive from Amherst. Then I continued the tradition with my five children of spending vacations in Nova Scotia. My husband and I bought our own cottage on a private lane in Northport in 1993. This lane is gravel and is not serviced by the municipality. We pay to repair it and there is no access to our place in the winter months as the lane is not ploughed. Even if our road was ploughed, we could not spend any winter time in our cottage as it is not insulated. It also has no water during the winter.

While our cottage would not be suitable for year-round use, it is a lovely place to spend our summers now that we are retired. Over the twenty-nine years we have owned the cottage we have done many repairs totalling in well over \$100 000. These repairs have been done by locals and the materials have been purchased from Nova Scotia businesses. We also pay someone to open and close our cottage, to cut the grass when we aren't there and to keep an eye out for storm damage. This is one way we contribute to the local community.

My husband and I have been tourism ambassadors for the Province of Nova Scotia during the time we have had our cottage. Many, many visitors from Ontario have come to stay with us, visit tourist sites, dine in restaurants and shop. Many of these visitors would not have travelled to Nova Scotia if they had not had our place to in which to stay and my husband and I to be their tour guides.

My husband and I already pay municipal taxes on our property. The only service we get from those taxes is garbage pick-up. Should we require health care services, our expenses are covered by OHIP. We are definitely not a drain on the Province of Nova Scotia but rather, are a source of income.

I realize that there is a housing shortage in parts of Nova Scotia. I also have watched properties in the Northport area sit empty for years with a for sale sign in the front yard. Surely if there was a need for housing in our area, those properties would have been snatched up. Perhaps the Province should be looking to build some housing in the areas that need them rather than punish seasonal property owners who are not the problem and as such, cannot be part of the solution.

I am urging the province to amend this piece of legislation. Seasonal property owners should be exempt from this tax increase. If the aim really is to increase dwelling places for Nova Scotians and is not the tax grab it appears to be, the goal will not be achieved.

Sadly, Nova Scotia has a sad history of taking property away from citizens going way back to 1755 when my Acadian ancestors had their farms stolen from them by the British. There will be many seasonal cottage owners "from away" who will not be able to afford the increased taxes on cottages that have been passed down through many decades. By forcing them to sell, you are in the process of stealing those cottages from them. You will have not learned from Nova Scotia's shameful history.

Yours truly,
Deborah and Michael Rosebrugh