

April 14, 2022

Subject: Proposed tax on seasonal properties owned by non-residents

Dear Premier Houston,

Please allow me to tell you my story, as a father who would also describe himself “first and foremost as a dad”. Much like you, my wife and I knew we wanted to raise our children close to their extended family. This decision for us meant staying in Saint John. For you it meant returning to Nova Scotia. Might you feel differently about this new tax proposal if your father had taken his final posting somewhere other than Nova Scotia and your family had settled elsewhere to be close to family?

My wife and I live in Rothesay, New Brunswick and have four daughters and seven grandchildren all of whom live within ten minutes of our home. We also own a family cottage property in Nova Scotia. It is 115 years old and un-insulated with plumbing that must be drained at the end of each season. This is where my story begins.

My great grandfather Murdock was a successful businessman in Amherst in the late 1800's. In 1899 he rode his horse and buggy out to the shores of the Northumberland Strait in search of land to build a cottage for his family. He chose a spot on the Amherst Shore near where today the Chapman Settlement Road intersects Route 366 and located on a lane that now bears the family name. So began our family's tradition of summer holidays at the shore that has continued for six generations and over 123 years. Three of the Murdock children, one being my grandmother, came to own cottages at the shore. My father, also born in Amherst, attended Dalhousie University and moved to Saint John in 1950 to open his medical practice. My mother was born in New Glasgow and graduated from the Aberdeen School of Nursing before moving to Saint John to start her nursing career. Our family continued the tradition of vacations at the shore throughout my father's career. Before my father retired he bought the cottage from my great uncle to enjoy in his retirement and to maintain our family connection to the shore. Before I retired I bought the cottage from my father, knowing that my children and grandchildren were excited to continue spending their summer vacations on the sand bars.

I am writing today to inform you of my family's story as just one of the many thousands of seasonal cottagers with deep family ties to their properties in Nova Scotia, even though they may now reside outside your province. Your government's proposal to nearly triple the annual property tax on these properties is highly punitive to all those who wish to continue their long-standing family traditions by returning to their seasonal properties each year. It is out of character with the reputation of Nova Scotians, as those who embrace fellow Canadians who wish to come to their province. It is also inconsistent with your stated promise to Nova Scotians to “make your province... a magnet for tourists while remaining proud of their traditions and heritage”. I find myself a New Brunswicker with a proud Nova Scotia heritage for the same reason you find yourself a Nova Scotian with a proud

Nova Scotian heritage. You and I both wanted to raise our families near their extended family members. This is the same reason my children cherish our cottage life, as all the siblings and cousins gather together there each summer. As for tourism, I would ask, what better tourist than one who invests in the community, pays taxes and promises to return for three or four months every year? No advertising or marketing required to get us back year after year,

From what little detail that is currently available on line, it appears to be your government's intention to apply this tax equally to both seasonal properties and fully winterized residential properties. If a tax is the solution to the housing shortage in Nova Scotia, applying it to non-winterized cottages in rural areas seems unlikely to be part of the solution. Applying this tax to a seasonal dwelling that can only be used three or four months of the year at the same rate as one that can be used year round is an unfair financial burden applied to properties that do nothing to ease your housing shortage. Based on three months of available usage, this tax would be four times higher per day of use on seasonal non-winterized dwellings as it would be on a property that can be used twelve months of the year. Taxing non-resident owners with multi generational ties to Nova Scotia out of their seasonal properties will do nothing to help solve the housing shortage and will be detrimental to cottage communities throughout the province. I encourage you to reconsider this proposal and to exempt non-winterized seasonal properties if this new tax must be implemented to address housing shortages in urban areas.

I know I am not alone in these views as there have been numerous submissions to you from provincial and municipal politicians as well as Nova Scotia residents, encouraging you to reconsider the implementation of this new tax. I join with them in sharing my concern as a father who has always wanted to pass along a piece of our family's heritage to my children to be enjoyed for many generations to come.

I fear this increased financial burden is not in the retirement budgets of many who have similar aspirations.

I look forward to your reply.

Regards

Paul Rodger

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