

Dear Premier Houston and MLA MacMaster:

This letter is in regards to the amendment to the property taxes for out of province individuals owing property in Nova Scotia. In 1997 my husband and I bought a little cottage on the Amherst Shore of Nova Scotia within our financial means at the time (only 40 minutes from our home in Sackville, New Brunswick). As a child my parents and I spent every summer on the Amherst Shore area with friends who lent us their cottage for my father's summer vacations. Many people from our town in New Brunswick had cottages along the Amherst Shore since it was so close. It wasn't a foreign destination for us, it's simply a drive. The area has all my childhood memories of clamming and walking the sandflats.

As an adult my husband and I had been searching for our own cottage but for 20 years managed to find properties along Amherst Shore to rent for the month of August until we found our cottage to purchase that was in our price range and was shorefront. So for some 60 years we have helped the economy of the Amherst Shore by having friends from other provinces spend time with us while spending summers in Cumberland County. They become ambassadors on return to their provinces and they return with friends to experience the beauty of the province. Now we are both retired and can spend even more months at our summer get-away, again supporting the economy of the county.

Sackville and Amherst are border towns and we have contributed to the Nova Scotia economy our whole lives and contribute to that economy weekly.

It is so frustrating for us as we do not have a say, a vote or input into this decision but we have paid our taxes for 25 years, have supported the economy for all these years. This seems to be a blindside as "older" owners. We did not have this knowledge when we purchased. New purchasers will be informed. For many of us retirees this may become a burden and for those of us with families, inheriting the cottages will place financial burdens on them and to what end. If cottages are considered a luxury as in some provinces, why not increase taxes universally or in small increments, why penalize only "non residential owners". It would broaden your tax base significantly. The concept that if you are not from Nova Scotia and own a cottage there makes you more affluent is not true. It is certainly not true for older cottage owners. I am sure some are wealthy but I am also sure the majority or citizens are just like us, simply looking to enjoy the beaches of the Northumberland Strait. It makes us not feel welcome and penalized and it makes us have to reconsider owing property in Nova Scotia.

For the two years of the pandemic we could not use our cottage until July even though we could bicycle to our cottage from the New Brunswick border. We paid our taxes and did not contest our tax bill even though we lost two months of prime use for two summers. We could not even check on our cottage for over 7 months but we paid taxes for 12 months in 2020 and 2021. Again we did not complain and now to add such a significant hike in taxes we feel we are being penalized simply for not being from Nova Scotia.

I believe we should have received this notice of events when our annual assessment was sent to us to at least be able to input but we are finding this out through newspaper clippings. I would like you to understand the impact this will have on the "regular" cottage owner in Nova Scotia. With the added burdens of higher inflation, higher taxes in our own provinces, this will hit even harder.

I would like you to read this and understand the feelings of many of us and I am also well aware so many have no clue this is even happening as I have informed many out of province owners who had no idea this was coming. Also an integrated plan would have been more fair as well, not a big instant surprise money grab . I am very disappointed in this decision and would like you to re-consider as I have been an admirer of your time In office previous to this and your measured decision making on many other issues. Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely yours,

(a Nova Scotia property tax payer from just across the border)

Lorraine and Vaughan Wheaton
Sackville New Brunswick