

**Honourable Stephen McNeil, Premier,**

**Please do not sell public land.** NS has very little public land. It should not be sold to or for private interests. The Nova Scotia Nature Trust and the Nature Conservancy of Canada are working hard to purchase and secure ecologically significant lands in NS, with substantial (several millions of dollars of) funding being provided by both private and public individuals and organizations in support of their efforts. They are focusing on connected ecological systems along the eastern shore and elsewhere to complement Provincial conservation efforts. There is strong public support of their efforts, providing solid evidence of public economic and ethical valuation of public and private land conservation in NS.

**Please do not sell Owls Head.** Such an act would be in full opposition to such public and private conservation efforts. Ecologically, Owls Head is **globally significant**. Intact temperate coastal barrens ecosystems are globally rare, and mainly remain in our region. As such, we have an extra obligation to the world to safeguard these ecosystems.

As Premier of NS, you have **provincial, national and international/bilateral responsibilities** to protect this and other intact temperate ecosystems through Canada's support of the IUCN's Red List of endangered ecosystems, commitments under the Convention on Biodiversity, Canada's Biodiversity Strategy, Sustainable Development Goals, and Canada's Pathway to Target 1, as well as under NS's Parks and Protected Areas Plan, EGSPA and the Sustainable Development Goals Act, and the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Resolution 40-3: Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation, to which you, Honourable Stephen McNeil, Premier, are signatory.

We are in the midst of both **climate and biological diversity (extinction) emergencies**, wherein we are at or beyond planetary thresholds for being able to recover. Such intact ecosystems as Owls Head are our ecological **life-support systems**. We need them in order to survive as a species, as do the other species with which we share this land, many of which are endangered.

**Nature-based solutions**, which protected areas represent, are critical to addressing the sister crises of climate and biodiversity, through safeguarding species, storing and sequestering carbon, cleansing water and air, and other ecosystem services.

Please do not delist protected areas without the same sorts of **extensive and prolonged public processes** that were conducted to list them in the first place. These sites were established with extensive public consultation. It is not right, possibly illegal and surely unethical, to secretly delist them.

To instead require the developer to conduct a **public consultation after the land is sold is a disingenuous** passing of the buck. It is unfair to both the public and the potential buyer/developer. Such a proposal or requirement inserts public input far too late in the process. The public does not want the land to be sold. Further, at such a late stage, as is proposed, public consultation has rarely, if ever, resulted in the refusal or non-approval of a proposed development regardless of how strenuously the public has objected. At that point, it is solely a box-checking exercise to be gone through as part of a rubber-stamping process. Such late-

coming public processes seldom, if ever, take the public's views seriously or genuinely (meaningfully) into account or safeguards their expressed values.

As evidence of strong public support for not selling Owls Head, an ad hoc groups of citizens has raised over **\$15,000 dollars in less than 6 days to support legal action** to stop the sale. This is significant.

Finally, **the land belongs to the Mi'kmaw people**. They have **Aboriginal and Treaty Rights**. The Mi'kmaw are 'Rights holders' not 'stakeholders', and the land should not be sold without their full and prior agreement, in a nation-to-nation governance relationship. We are all treaty people. We (you) need to live up to the provisions of the **Treaties of Peace and Friendship** and Aboriginal Rights enshrined in **Canada's Constitution Act**, and as upheld in case law.

You did the right thing with Northern Pulp. Do the right thing again now, and re-list Owls Head for protection. By doing so, you will **regain the hard-won respect and trust of the people of NS** that you secured by being strong and ethical in the Northern Pulp situation. Do not lose the peoples' support now, just before an election.

I look forward to your response, and urge you to stop this potential sale.

Respectfully,

**Karen Beazley**

**Dalhousie Institute for Resource and Environmental Studies.**