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Premier Iain Rankin

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March 15, 2021

RE: Proposed Biodiversity Act

Dear Premier Iain Rankin,

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce has been the voice of Business in Colchester for 131 years. The 450 members represent a diverse cross section of industries and sectors.

Over the past number of weeks, the Chamber has received feedback from a number of businesses with land interests representing forestry, agriculture and resource regarding the proposed provincial Biodiversity Act, Bill 4.

In particular, our members were surprised and unaware of the legislation, driven by consultation, that appears rushed and deliberate. Landowners are left with uncertainty and questions over the intent of the legislation and fear the impact of an Act that gives broad powers to the Minister with undetermined, unclear and undefined boundaries.

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce and its members support our province's desire to live and prosper in a sustainable region. Efforts to reach this can come with a cost which must be balanced. Reaching a balance should be afforded to all businesses and citizens of the province through transparent and meaningful dialogue.

The region's lands have been the centerpiece of our economy since these lands were first settled, providing sustainable resources for farming, forestry and mining sectors. We are pleased Bill 4 includes many of the recommendations provided by industry following the initial tabling of Bill 116 in March of 2020.

The business community has a strong desire to work with government to ensure outside interests looking to invest in the province have clear and defined regulations that would allow them to measure their risk in operating in Nova Scotia. We feel government has a responsibility to ensure there are comprehensible guidelines for both business and landowners to follow. We have witnessed past examples of ambiguous and subjective guidelines resulting in a retraction of provincial permits that has left the region with a poor reputation for investors.



We are writing to you to request that the provincial government pause its urgent effort to pass this piece of legislation offering more time to re-engage residents and business whose interests are at stake. This will ensure that lands and resources are not inadvertently paralyzed from economic activity potentially impacting the region's economy. It is imperative the Act be provided time for consideration by all stakeholders, including the private landowners, in its entirety before being pushed through the legislature.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for businesses in the Truro & Colchester region and across the province. As the recognized voice of business, the Chamber has provided ongoing support to the business community during these difficult times. The Chamber will continue its efforts to meet business needs as the pandemic stretches through 2021 and beyond and we look forward to working with you and your government to achieve those goals.

To further discuss the Chamber's position on the proposed Biodiversity Act or other business - related issues, please contact myself, Chamber Executive Director Sherry Martell, by calling 902-895-6328 or by email ed@tcchamber.ca

Sincerely,

Sherry Martell
Executive Director
Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce

CC: Honourable Chuck Porter, Minister Lands and Forestry
Karen Casey, Colchester North MLA
Larry Harrison, South Colchester MLA
David Ritcey, Truro- Bible Hill-Mill Brook-Salmon River
Tim Houston, Leader of the Opposition, MLA Pictou East