

March 28, 2013



Mr. David Smith
Acting Director of Planning
Service Nova Scotia and
Municipal Relations

2089 Maitland Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2Z8

Tel. 902.423.4480
800.948.4267

Fax. 902.422.0184

dsmith@gov.ns.ca

www.tians.org

Dear Mr. Smith:

We are writing as follow up to a letter send to your office on March 19th, 2013, from Ms. Judy Saunders regarding the draft Statement of Provincial Interest (SPI) as it relates to farmland throughout the province.



While we applaud the provinces commitment to establishing a SPI in an effort to protect agricultural land for the development of a viable and sustainable agriculture and food industry, we would also suggest that the importance of protecting agricultural land for the tourism industry cannot be ignored and should be stated.



In 2011 tourism receipts for the province totaled just over \$2 billion, with over half of this amount generated in rural communities. Ms. Saunders rightly points out the opportunities with culinary and wine tourism. She also points out that Kings County has been a leader in the development of the local food and winery sectors - contributing greatly to the development of new businesses closely linked to the agricultural assets we have. Culinary and wine tourism is growing; as well Agri-tourism holds great appeal to those wanting to experience the Nova Scotia product in an authentic and hands on way.



In many countries where the decline of traditional industries such as fishing, forestry and farming has brought financial hardship to rural communities, Agri-tourism has been promoted as a replacement to lost economic activity. Agri-tourism can bring a wide range of benefits to the agricultural industry including:

'expanding farm operations; using farm based products in new and innovative ways; improving farm revenue streams; developing new consumer niches; increasing awareness of local agricultural products; increasing appreciation of the importance of maintaining agricultural land uses; thus increasing the long term sustainability for farm businesses.'

We would like to see a more holistic approach regarding long term protection and use of agricultural land. Ms. Saunders references farm banking as a way to work with farmers as a succession model, and this has been done in other jurisdictions that place high value on their agricultural assets. There is also precedent with this in how the government has bought back forestry lands from companies and woodlot owners.

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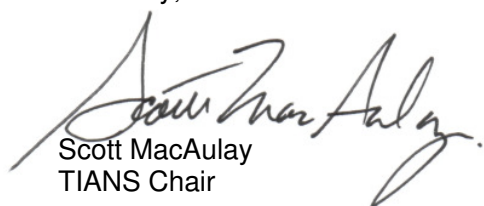
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The same value needs to be placed on our agricultural assets. Nova Scotia also needs to look at initiatives that will encourage local entrepreneurship; new immigration from qualified farmers interested in investing in active farm operations.

In closing, TIANS strongly supports the efforts to put in place guidelines that will support and protect agricultural lands. Our natural assets are crucial to a healthy society and a healthy tourism industry.

We offer our support in any way appropriate as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,



Scott MacAulay
TIANS Chair



Darlene Grant Fiander
TIANS President

cc Honourable John MacDonell, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations
Honourable Percy Paris, Economic and Rural Development and Tourism
Mr. Patrick Sullivan, CEO, Nova Scotia Tourism Agency
Ms. Judy Saunders, Old Orchard Inn
TIANS Board