



August 18, 2009

**Presentation to Minister Sterling Belliveau
Nova Scotia Department of Environment**

Minister, thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this afternoon. Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of the Environment as well as Fisheries and Aquaculture. On behalf of the Board of Directors of TIANS, I am pleased to join the Ecology Action Centre and Nova Scotia Public Lands Coalition this afternoon to present our position on issues we feel are fundamental to the health of our Industry. We are proud of our strong association with EAC and as a founding member of the Public Lands Coalition, we believe strongly in the principles of the work being done and that the collective efforts of this group has had a very positive impact for all Nova Scotians.

Tourism is a 1.2 billion dollar industry in Nova Scotia, so we understand the need for a healthy and competitive business environment. We also understand that a healthy natural environment is one of the principal star attractions for Tourism.

Adventure tourism and recreation is the fastest growing sector of tourism in the country and Nova Scotia has been blessed with an abundance of natural, historical and cultural assets. Demographic trends indicate our visitors desire to experience nature and seek authentic tourism product. The past number of decades have seen our natural heritage constrained and negatively impacted by irresponsible forestry, mining and agriculture practices, marine pollution, shrinking public coastal access on a macro level and regional community development issues at the local level.

In 2006, TIANS engaged the tourism industry in a coastal strategy process to identify actions that the tourism sector could move forward regarding coastal access, protection of natural coastal features and sustainable use of the coastline for tourism purposes. TIANS member surveys have indicated 32% of our members would like TIANS to work on Sustainable Coastal Tourism Development as a priority. They understand the human connection we all have to the sea and its value as our core tourism product.

A vital part of our industry's future success will require proactive stewardship of our public and protected lands. During the election campaign, TIANS requested the NDP's position on a number of key issues related to tourism including the environment. We were delighted that your party firmly committed to ensuring the minimum 12% target protection of public lands would be met on or before the original target date.

We fully support the principles of the Protected Areas Network and applaud your establishment of the Community Lands Trust which will ensure that communities can retain land that is important for their traditional economic, tourism and recreational uses. We also appreciate that you are continuing the Crown Share Land Legacy Trust Fund.

TIANS played a key role in ensuring tourism stakeholders were represented in the Voluntary Planning Report on Natural Resources released earlier this year. The report identified that in order to become sustainable, Nova Scotia must change the way we manage our natural resources. Your government has the opportunity to champion issues that were absent in that report including the need for coastal biodiversity protection and addressing practices that impact climate change.

It is crucial that we continue to work in partnership to ensure environmentally sensitive areas are identified and protected in order to ensure their availability for future generations. Premier Dexter's election campaign identified the environment as a key priority and in response to our industry issue questions specifically identified protecting public access to the coast and other sensitive areas as a priority for the NDP.

We believe that action on these promises would garner support across political and geographical boundaries as they truly are issues that will benefit all Nova Scotians.

Your government has made commitments on a number of key environmental issues. Today, we are asking the provincial government to accelerate the completion of Nova Scotia's protected areas network. Some specific actions we request are:

- Finalize the designation for Ship Harbour Long Lake immediately. This area has garnered significant community support during the process and is awaiting final designation.
- Provide full Wilderness Area protection to the Chignecto Game Sanctuary. This area is situated in a "Golden Triangle" ecotourism mecca whose other key attractions include Chignecto Provincial Park, Joggins Fossil Cliffs Museum and the Fundy Geological Museum. Protection of this area should include adjacent Crown lands and coastal regions. This area remains vulnerable to clear cutting, mining, road building and seismic testing. Cumberland County is significantly under-represented in the Protected Areas Network and the plan proposed by the Department of Natural Resources earlier this year provides less than adequate protection for the region.

- Fogerty's Cove - provides an opportunity to protect a significant coastal area in the Guysborough region as a protected area. With the exception of a few tiny parcels, these are the last public lands on the rapidly developing Chedabucto Bay shoreline. Protecting these areas will ensure that the public can continue to access and enjoy a coastal wilderness on the bay.
- Hume's River in Cape Breton is another environmentally sensitive area needing protection. As the last completely intact watershed in the Bras d'Or Lake system, this area could provide opportunities to highlight the ecosystem of the region. Located along the Trans Canada, it is ideally situated for development as a rest stop with interpretive signage and has the potential for ecotourism activities including walking trails through old growth forest.
- The Five Bridges Lakes Wilderness Area (also known as Chebucto Wilderness) is another area which warrants legislated protection from the Department of Environment. This area is easily accessible for residents and visitors alike and could be developed into a significant ecotourism destination for day trips from cruise ship passengers and other visitors. Despite efforts from a well organized and diverse committee of stakeholders, this area has not yet been designated as a candidate for protection.

We would also ask that your government:

- ? aggressively acquire and formally protect undeveloped coastal lands in Nova Scotia. Public Land accounts for approximately 30.4% of Nova Scotia's total area (the smallest amount of Public Land in any Province with the exception of P.E.I.). Of that amount, only 5% is made up of coastal areas. It is critical that we take steps today to ensure we have long term access to our coast which is a fundamental part of the Nova Scotia experience.

And finally, we would ask that you:

- ? remove the loophole in the Wilderness Area Protection Act which could allow recreational ATV use.

We urge you to use this opportunity to create a legacy in the protection and preservation of Nova Scotia's most valuable natural assets and ask that you show leadership in this important area - use this opportunity to make a real difference and we will work hard with your government to support your efforts.

Minister Belliveau, thank you for your time today and we wish you all the best as you assume this important portfolio for the people of Nova Scotia.