

17 November, 2025

The Honourable Tim Houston, M.L.A.
Premier of Nova Scotia
Office of the Premier
PO Box 726
Halifax, NS
B3J 2T3

Re: Protecting Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes

Dear Premier Houston,

On behalf of the Halifax Field Naturalists, we are writing to urge your government to protect the Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) wilderness areas, and to remove them from the list of Special Planning Areas (SPAs). The current push to re-zone these ecologically sensitive landscapes for rapid development represents a grave risk to biodiversity, community wellbeing, and long-term fiscal and environmental health.

These areas are among the most ecologically valuable landscapes in the Halifax Regional Municipality. They contain old-growth forests, critical wildlife corridors, salmon-bearing watersheds, and natural flood-mitigation systems that protect communities. They also provide essential public health and recreation benefits for thousands of residents.

Designating these sensitive ecosystems as SPAs for fast-tracked suburban development threatens:

- **Biodiversity**, including species at risk and the last intact wildlife corridors connecting the Chebucto Peninsula.
- **Water quality**, including Sandy Lake’s vulnerable headwaters and protected-area buffers.
- **Climate resilience**, as forests and wetlands prevent flooding and store carbon.
- **Public finances**, because development outside the Urban Service Boundary requires expensive new roads, water, wastewater systems, and long-term maintenance.

Nova Scotia needs more housing — but it must be built in serviced, transit-supported areas, not in irreplaceable natural landscapes that future generations depend on.

We therefore call on the Province of Nova Scotia to:

1. **Remove Sandy Lake and the BMBCL/Highway 102 West area from the Special Planning Areas list.**
2. **Work with HRM, community groups, and Indigenous partners to secure lasting protection** for these wilderness areas as parkland and conservation lands.
3. **Prioritize housing development within the existing Urban Service Boundary**, where infrastructure, transit, and climate goals can be met responsibly.

These forests, lakes, and wetlands are not vacant land waiting to be built on — they are some of the last and most valuable natural assets in urban Nova Scotia. Once lost, they are lost forever.

We urge your government to act now to protect Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes for the benefit of our communities, our climate, and future generations.

Sincerely,

Bernie McKenna
President
Halifax Field Naturalists

cc.

The Honourable Colton LeBlanc, M.L.A.
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