Halifax Field Naturalists
c/o Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History
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7 March, 2026

The Honourable Tim Houston, M.L.A.
Premier of Nova Scotia
Office of the Premier
PO Box 726
Halifax, NS
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Subject: **Request to Reconsider Elimination of Wildlife Division at DNR**

Dear Premier Houston,

On behalf of the Halifax Field Naturalists, I am writing to express our profound concern regarding the recent elimination of the Wildlife Division within the Department of Natural Resources and the broader restructuring of the department.

For more than a century, wildlife conservation, biodiversity protection, and science-based stewardship have been central to the DNR mandate. The dissolution of the Wildlife Division and the removal of senior managers responsible for biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats, and wildlife science represent significant and troubling shifts in that mandate.

We understand the government's stated goal of realigning the department to better support economic development while maintaining stewardship. However, the consolidation of wildlife functions into an "Integrated Resources Planning" unit within the new Land Strategy and Planning Branch, combined with the elimination of dedicated leadership positions, raises serious questions about whether independent, science-driven conservation expertise will continue to have the authority and influence necessary to ensure credible, evidence-based decision-making.

Our volunteer organization has more than 50 years of experience conducting and supporting conservation activities in Nova Scotia. With an engaged community of members and followers, we are strongly devoted to the study, appreciation, and conservation of Nova Scotia's natural history. We have confidence in the rigorous field science historically conducted by DNR. Long-term wildlife monitoring, habitat assessment, and species-at-risk research are not optional luxuries; they are foundational to responsible land-use planning and sustainable economic development. Without robust in-house expertise to review environmental impact statements, identify ecological risks, and monitor trends over time, the province risks compromising both biodiversity and public trust.

We are particularly concerned that this restructuring appears to prioritize resource extraction over conservation safeguards. Nova Scotians value our forests, wetlands, coastlines, and wildlife not only for their economic contributions but for their intrinsic ecological importance and their role in community well-being. Effective stewardship requires maintaining a strong, independent scientific capacity within government and not dispersing or diminishing it.

The Halifax Field Naturalists respectfully request that your government:

1. Reconsider the elimination of the Wildlife Division and restore a clearly defined, science-based wildlife and biodiversity branch within DNR.

2. Reinstate dedicated leadership positions focused on biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats, and wildlife management.

3. Engage in transparent consultation with conservation organizations, Indigenous communities, scientists, and the public regarding any further structural changes to natural resource governance.

Healthy ecosystems and sustainable economic development are not opposing goals. Indeed, they depend upon one another. DNR scientists, including biologists, foresters, and geologists, have long engaged in constructive discussions about best practices and effective ways to promote development while protecting the natural environment. In particular, a strong in-house wildlife science capacity has long helped ensure that development decisions meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is now at risk.

Nova Scotia's natural heritage is one of our province's greatest assets. It deserves careful, evidence-based stewardship and a government structure that reflects that responsibility.

Sincerely,

original signed by Don Flemming, HFN Director, for

Bernie McKenna
President
Halifax Field Naturalists

cc.

The Honourable Kim Masland, M.L.A.
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