

Text for talks by Bill Z, David P, Oct 18, 2022

Bill Zebedee

My friends, 3 kilometres from here is...well was a beautiful piece of land that can be beautiful again. In 2020 the Eisner Cove Wetland, previously crown land, was sold to a private interest. A private interest who is now working with Clayton Developments and The Shaw Group to build a residential neighbourhood. A neighbourhood built on a false narrative started by the developer and bought into by the government.

That false narrative is this development will deal with the housing crisis we face here in Nova Scotia. A housing crisis I have personally about because I was homeless for 2 years, as I couch surfed. Happily I had family and friends I could rely on for a somewhat comfortable bed or cot and a roof over my head. The people who need housing right now are the ones who need help, it isn't, as Kevin Neatt, from Clayton Developments said, middle income earners who deserve to own a home. It is the hundreds of people who call the streets home; who live in their cars; or couch surf as I did. It is the family of six living in a one bedroom apartment who need a home. It is the people who have been evicted from the forest belt around Eisner Cove Wetland who need housing now. That is the real narrative this government should be listening to.

3 kms away they have already started clearcutting, I'm guessing, 10 hectares. That leaves 35 hectares left for the animals and plant life that call it home. Where are those animals going to go when Clayton Development and the Shaw Group finish deforestation activities? Well, again, let's go to something Mr. Neatt, from Clayton Developments, said in February at our one and only public meeting, "they'll just migrate elsewhere". With the clearcutting this government is condoning there won't be anywhere for animals to migrate to Mr. Neatt, but thank you for your flippant answer.

Now, we've been accused of making things up, but everything we've said is part of documented proof the developer and government feel they can swipe left if they don't like it. Let's look at a couple of those for a moment.

There is something called a Wetland Ecosystem Service Protocol, or a WESP. There was a WESP done a couple years ago by Ducks Unlimited. The summary of this WESP said there were a rare waterbird species and rare plants known in the wetland. What's going to

happen to them now that the development process has begun? This government had a chance to save and protect them.

Then there are the birds. We know, because of a report provided to us, there are 45 birds that called the wetland home. 35 of those birds are on the Migratory Bird List, part of a federal act that protects them during migratory season. But, did the developer or the government care about those birds or the law? Nope. We have video of some migratory birds still nesting while the developer was clearcutting.

We've also been accused of the Not In My Backyard syndrome. An accusation that is too easily thrown around by developers and their supporters whenever there is opposition to a development like this, and make no mistake, there is opposition to this development. Well, we have a sign in Ontario and we have a bumper sticker in Saskatchewan. Surely those people can't be accused of being NIMBY.

So, what are the issues? Is it housing versus the environment movement? Nope, we have been clear from the beginning we know housing is needed, but there are better places to build it in HRM.

The underlying issue is a lack of transparency and openness from this government. The sale of the property was done during the time of the previous government, but this current government is complacent in what happened.

We have had questions from day one about the sale of the property. Questions such as how it was the assessed value of three parcels at Eisner Cove Wetland held fast for the five years before the sale, but dropped almost 80% the year of the sale. Well, we tried to find out all we could about how the land went from public crown land to private hands, but we were slapped in the face with a whopping \$3,800 FOIPOP fee for that information. Shameful.

We question if the land was sold to the letter and spirit of the Sale of Crown Land Act. Were the Mi'kmaq consulted before the sale? And so many other questions. Our governments have been distorting policy and legislation when it comes to the sale of Crown land. The policy document describes how Nova Scotia is special because we only have about 35% Crown land whereas other provinces and territories have 50-90%. The opening paragraph of the Crown Lands Act describes the purpose of that legislation. It speaks of managing and protecting the natural environment. Whether you live in northern Nova Scotia, the southwest, Cape Breton or anywhere in between, you should

be deeply concerned how our governments have been treating Crown land as a commodity for the private sector to cash in.

I want to end with a thank you. Thank you to Darlene Gilbert, a well respected Mi'kmaq Grassroots Grandmother, for providing welcome today. Thanks to our MLA Claudia Chender, our next speaker, for tabling our petition today. A thank you to our other speakers for sharing your knowledge. And, a big thank you to each of you for being here. Without your support we would just be a bunch of people talking in the wilderness.

I'd like to close with a thought. History is written by the victors. Let's not The Shaw Group, Clayton Development and the Houston Government be the ones who right the history of this fight to protect Eisner Cove Wetland.

David Graham Patriquin

A good rally. Good people. It was an honour to be asked to talk. Here is what I said:

The Biodiversity crisis is real.

The climate crisis is real, very real.

The Housing Crisis is also real.

But we do NOT need to pit housing against Biodiversity and Climate.

There is one very simple principle to be applied to housing: **we do not develop on sites with a high degree of Ecological Integrity when alternative, already ecologically degraded sites are available.**

But that is what's happening at the Southdale Future growth Node / Eisner Wetland site.

The plan is to cut down approx 45 hectares of near pristine forest in the sloping uplands to provide housing for 1200 or more residential units, while retaining 10-12 ha of pristine wetland as an "amenity", and 10% of the upland area as parkland.

There has been no consideration given to the loss of carbon storage from loss of the forest and soil.

There has been no consideration given to the inevitable negative effects on the wetland from destroying the forest and replacing it with hardscape.

It is simply assumed the wetland will remain as it is.

I can say, based on scientific observations of such processes elsewhere, and of observations at this site that its very very likely that the wetland will degrade species-wise, and also will transform from a carbon storage system to one that emits GHGs.

So why have these considerations been neglected?

Really thats a question for HRM to answer, the Housing Task Force to answer, the Shaw Group/Clayton Development Ltd. to answer, ENGLOBE Engineering Consultants, and for Ducks Unlimited to answer.

On Aug 24, I wrote a detailed 33 page analysis and commentary on the Landscape Suitability Analysis for the project prepared for Shaw/Clayton BY ENGLOBE (CONSULTING ENGINEERS). I identify serious issues with this analysis, for example it didnt even acknowledge that the wetland is a FEN, which means water runs through it and that water comes from the uplands.

Very concerning to me, is that the LSA does not cite the significant wetland properties of the area identified in a Ducks Unlimited WESP Report DATED JUNE 29, 2020— WELL BEFORE the LSA was begun to be prepared.

Very concerning to me is that the LSA is dated October 2021, yet it was not made available as a component of the documents to be considered when Regional Council voted to move ahead with this project on Jan 11, 2022; in fact it seems it was never made formally available to Regional Council and one councillor I spoke to who is otherwise knowledgable about this issue, said he wasnt even aware of it until much later.

The LSA is a very flawed report and if it had been looked at critically, I believe it would have been rejected by Staff and certainly questioned by Councillors.

THERE IS STILL TIME to save much of the uplands if the project is stopped now, and there would be little time lost by moving to another already ecologically degraded site.

Thats what should happen.

Regardless, we MUST document the entire process and ultimately hold those who made the critical decisions responsible.

We owe it to the planet, to the community and to each and every one of us. That to me is why we are here today.

<http://nswildflora.ca/comment/eisners-cove-wetland/letter-24aug2022/>