

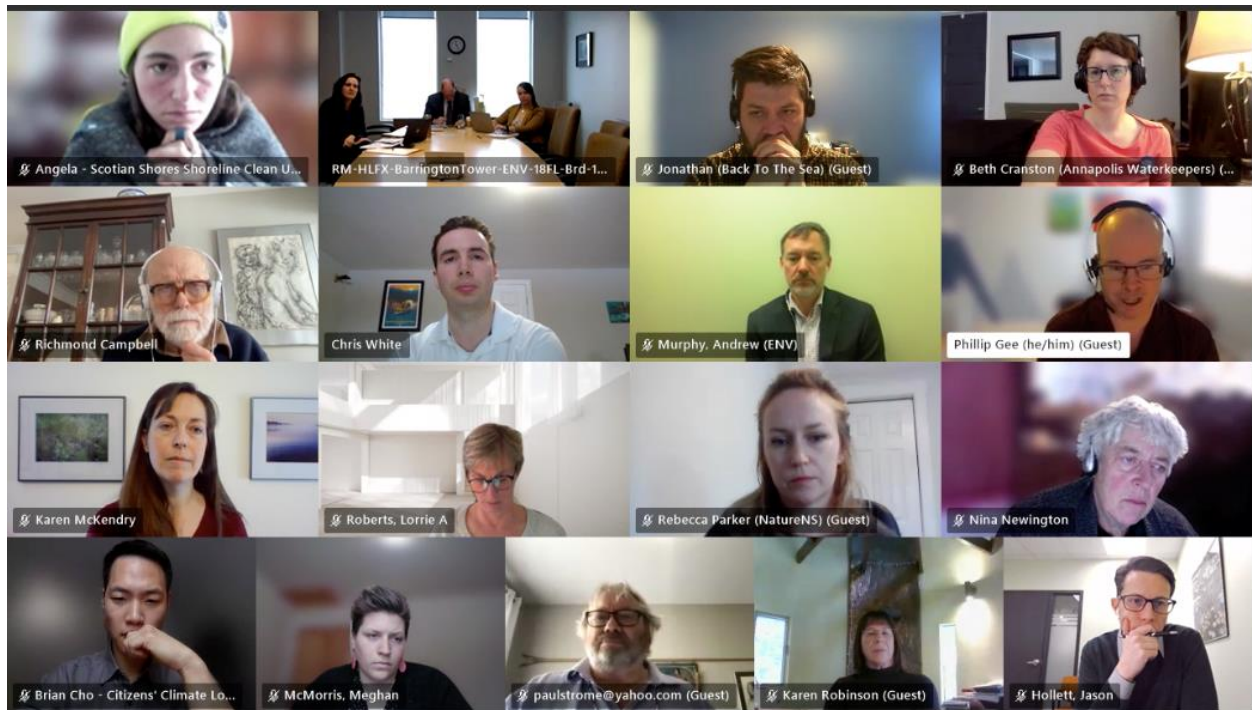


Nova Scotia Environmental Network

Connecting for a Sustainable Future

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting between Nova Scotia Environmental Network and Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change

March 3, 2022



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Executive Summary

Every year, member organizations of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN) meet with the Minister and senior staff of Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change (NSECC). These annual meetings provide an opportunity for organized citizens to discuss important issues with top provincial environmental officials, and likewise provide an opportunity for the Minister to listen and learn about the activities and priorities of local environmental organizations of all sizes.

This year’s meeting was held online from 10:00 – 11:30 AM on March 3, 2022 with Minister Tim Halman, who was appointed Minister of Environment and Climate Change in August 2021 by the newly elected Progressive Conservative provincial government. This meeting served to introduce Minister Halman to valued members of Nova Scotia’s environmental community as well as their top priorities, and establish a foundation on which to build individualized relationships and future engagements.

These proceedings summarize the key messages conveyed by Minister Halman and NSEN members during the meeting.

Attendees

From Nova Scotia Environmental Network and member organizations

- Annapolis Waterkeepers – Beth Cranston
- Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) Cape Breton – Kathleen Aikens
- Back to the Sea Society – Jonathan Primack
- Cape Breton Environmental Association – Dylan Yates
- Citizens’ Climate Lobby: Halifax Chapter – Brian Cho & Céó Fride
- Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq – Ashley Childs & Megan Pagniello
- Council of Canadians: South Shore Chapter – Charlene Morton
- Extinction Rebellion Mi’kma’ki / Nova Scotia – Nina Newington
- Helping Nature Heal – Raelene Fewer
- KAIROS Halifax – Linda Scherzinger
- Nature Nova Scotia – Rebecca Parker
- Sandy Lake Conservation Association – Karen Robinson & Richmond Campbell
- Scotian Shores – Angela Riley
- Sierra Club Atlantic – Maggie Bunbury
- NSEN Board of Directors – Chris White
- NSEN Climate Change Caucus – Philip Gee & Paul Strome
- NSEN Environmental and Sustainability Education Caucus – Karen McKendry
- NSEN Water Caucus – Patrick LeClair

Additional info on each NSEN member organization is provided in Appendix A.

From Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change:

- The Honourable Tim Halman (Minister of Environment and Climate Change)
- Brianna Faulkner (Principal Advisor to the Minister)
- Lora MacEachern (Deputy Minister)
- Jason Hollett (Associate Deputy Minister)
- Lorrie Roberts (Executive Director of Policy)
- Andrew Murphy (Executive Director of Sustainability and Applied Science)
- Nancy Rondeaux (Executive Director of Climate Change)
- Adrian Fuller (Executive Director of Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement)
- Meghan McMorris (Senior Planning Advisor)

Opening Statements

Chris White – NSEN

- Land acknowledgement
- Introduction to the Nova Scotia Environmental Network

Minister Halman – NSECC

- Introductions to the NSECC staff present
- Comments on the new government’s environmental mandate
 - The new government’s first speech from the throne outlined a vision of ensuring Nova Scotians have the healthiest environment and the strongest economy.
 - Premier Houston asked Minister Halman to take action to mitigate and adapt to the realities of climate change and to move Nova Scotia towards a cleaner and healthier environment.
 - Minister Halman is committed to listening, showing up, and being present.
- Comments on the [Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act \(EGCCRA\)](#)
 - This is a bold piece of legislation which the new provincial government introduced to enshrine 28 goals pertaining to sustainable development and climate change.
 - Minister Halman was inspired by those who spoke at the law amendments committee when *EGCCRA* was being debated. The government is taking the proposed ideas into consideration.
 - *EGCCRA* received the unanimous consent of all 55 MLAs.
- Comments on the implications of the [recent report](#) issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
 - The IPCC report makes it clear that this is a pivotal moment and that governments, businesses, and citizens must work together to address the climate crisis.
 - The Nova Scotia government is fully aware that they carry a great responsibility to lead on climate change policy and that this is a top priority for citizens.
 - Minister Halman knows that Nova Scotians are already experiencing the impacts of climate change and is committed to taking meaningful action.
 - Minister Halman is optimistic about the opportunity to transform Nova Scotia and the world towards sustainable prosperity.
 - Now that *EGCCRA* has passed, there is a lot of work to do, but it is achievable.
- Updates on NSECC’s work since the passing of *EGCCRA*
 - NSECC has been working with stakeholders to expand the province’s extended producer responsibility (EPR), which will now include single-use plastics and paper. Consultations are taking place until April 11, 2022.
 - NSECC designated the [French River Watershed](#) as a protected water area.
 - NSECC is currently focussing on developing the “Climate Risk Assessments for Nova Scotia” and the “Climate Change Plan”. These should be released in Spring 2022.
 - Now that *EGCCRA* has established the goals, the Climate Change Plan will outline concrete steps for climate change mitigation and adaptation in Nova Scotia.

Responses to Submitted Questions

Most NSEN member organizations submitted one or more questions to NSECC prior to the meeting (see Appendix B). Minister Halman addressed some of these questions following his opening statement.

Question topics under the purview of NSECC

- Carbon pricing
 - The federal government is requiring all provinces and territories to make changes to their respective carbon pricing programs starting in 2023. These changes will include a higher carbon price and broader coverage.
 - The Nova Scotia government has set the most aggressive emission reduction target in the country (53% below 2005 levels) and knows that carbon pricing is an effective tool to meet this goal.
 - The Nova Scotia government is still conducting analysis and has not yet made any decisions on carbon pricing.
 - Once a decision is made, Nova Scotia's plan must be presented to the federal government for approval. Once the plan is approved it will be shared with the public.
- The Green Fund
 - The Green Fund invests the revenue from Nova Scotia's cap-and-trade auctions into projects that address climate change. So far, \$73.5 million has been raised.
 - Green Fund revenues and investments are audited and shared publicly through news releases and an annual report released every July.
 - On January 27, 2022, the Nova Scotia government announced \$37.3 million in Green Fund investments for:
 - Affordable housing retrofits
 - Flood line mapping
 - Solar incentives for single family homes
 - The Sustainability Communities Challenge Fund
 - The Home Energy Assessment program
 - Climate change initiatives within provincial government departments
- Land protection
 - Land protection is mentioned in Minister Halman's mandate letter, so he is accountable to the premier and to all Nova Scotians.
 - The Nova Scotia government is committed through legislation to protect 20% of Nova Scotia's land and water by 2030. NSECC is currently preparing a strategy to achieve this target.
 - Minister Halman will be working with the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, Tory Rushton, to develop an action plan to designate more protected areas. Nova Scotians will be consulted on this.
 - Through the federal government's Canada Nature Fund Target 1 Challenge, the Nova Scotia government recently received and distributed [\\$1.5 million](#) to protect more natural areas in Nova Scotia.
 - NSECC is currently finalizing the consultation of the [What We Heard Report](#) on the *Coastal Protection Act* regulations. This will be shared publicly in the near future.

Question topics under the purview of other departments

- The Atlantic Loop
 - Premier Houston and Minister Rushton (Department of Natural Resources and Renewables) are leading the work on the Atlantic Loop. It would be best to speak to Minister Rushton on this topic.
- Oil & gas exploration
 - The oil and gas sector is under Minister Rushton's portfolio.
- A just transition toward renewable electricity generation
 - Minister Rushton's team is working on a plan to transition Nova Scotia from coal fired electricity to 80% renewable electricity by 2030.
 - There are a lot of discussions taking place regarding the 300 workers still employed at Nova Scotia's coal-fired power plants and ensuring they have an opportunity to transfer to green jobs in the renewable energy sector. Nova Scotia Power is working on this with Minister Rushton and Minister Baler (Department of Labor, Skills and Immigration).
 - The just transition was discussed at the Natural Resources Committee held on February 22, 2022. This can be viewed on the [legislature website](#).
- The [Lahey Report](#)
 - The Lahey Report is under Minister Rushton's portfolio.
- Brownfield sites
 - Brownfield and greenfield sites are a municipal zoning and planning issue, so this should be discussed with municipalities.
- Environmental Education
 - Minister Halman knows that over the past 10-15 years many Nova Scotian teachers have taken their own initiative to teach about climate change and sustainability, and this is reflected in the environmental mindset of Nova Scotia's youth today. But there is still plenty of room to embed specific curriculum outcomes from pre-primary up to grade 12.
 - Environmental education has been embedded in *EGCCRA* to ensure that Nova Scotia's youth receive early engagement on environment and sustainability.
 - Minister Druhan and Deputy Montreuil (Department of Education) are working on environmental topics to include in the school curriculum.

Roundtable with NSEN Members

Each NSEN member organization spent 3-4 minutes introducing themselves to Minister Halman.

1. Beth Cranston – Annapolis Waterkeepers

- Annapolis Waterkeepers is concerned with Arlington Heights C&D, which is a toxic landfill in the Arlington watershed.
- The Arlington watershed sources 25+ wells and springs in St. Croix Cove.
- Arlington Heights C&D received approvals in 2005, but community members were unaware of the project and its expansion until 2017.
- Highly contaminated effluent has escaped confinement at Arlington Heights.
- Long-term illegal dumping of highly toxic auto shredder residue has triggered only warnings from NSECC.
- Annapolis Waterkeepers has tallied more than 150 documented cases where chemicals exceeded public drinking water standards. But for the past 5 years NSECC has declined to meet with concerned community members.
- Sites like this one need to be cleaned up and the environmental assessment process needs to be overhauled.
- Rural communities might be losing trust in NSECC, but there is hope that the relationship can be restored with Minister Halman's help.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks Annapolis Waterkeepers for their comments and advocacy.
- Minister Halman refers to Adrian Fuller, Executive Director of Inspection, Compliance, and Enforcement, to provide more information and updates.

Response from Adrian Fuller

- NSECC knows that Annapolis Waterkeepers have been dealing with the local office in Kentville where NSECC's hydrogeologist and compliance staff are located.
- The site has been around for a while, so NSECC is trying to establish the timeline of the environmental assessment requirements for that site. NSECC will follow up with Annapolis Waterkeepers on that.
- NSECC is looking into the activities on the site and requested more information from the site operator (due March 4, 2022).
- All that background information will help NSECC determine if they need to do more monitoring and sampling.
- The approval requires a community liaison committee and NSECC is trying to get that put in place to facilitate sharing of information directly between the operator and the community.
- As the regulator NSECC is responsible for responding to your concerns. NSECC encourages Annapolis Waterkeepers to continue communicating with the Kentville office. NSECC will continue to engage with Annapolis Waterkeepers on this.

2. Kathleen Aikens – ACAP Cape Breton

- ACAP Cape Breton serves Cape Breton Island and works with the regional municipality.
- ACAP Cape Breton focuses on:
 - Ecological monitoring to inform climate change adaptation
 - Ecosystem restoration in streams and forests
 - Waste diversion
 - The Trash-formers program for youth mentorship and environmental cleanup
 - Environmental education in schools and communities
 - They are also a coordinating member of the Climate Change Task Force
 - They are also a member of the Wetlands Planning Committee
- ACAP Cape Breton prioritize educating young people in Cape Breton
 - They delivered hands-on educational programming to over 1000 youth in Fall 2021.
- ACAP Cape Breton prioritizes the green workforce transition
 - They know the historical and present challenges with unemployment in Cape Breton.
 - They want to develop skills in nature-based solutions to climate change.
 - They want to mentor youth and others facing barriers to transitioning to the green workforce.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks ACAP Cape Breton and sees a lot of alignment with NSECC's work.
- ACAP Cape Breton can follow up with Andrew Murphy, Executive Director of Sustainability and Applied Science, to discuss waste diversion and consultations with expanded EPR.

3. Jonathan Primack – Back to the Sea Society

- Back to the Sea is a charity dedicated to sparking curiosity for marine life and inspiring a desire to protect our oceans.
- Back to the Sea runs a touch tank hut in Dartmouth in the summer.
 - Visitors of all ages come to interact with local marine life.
 - They have had 12,000 visitors since 2017.
 - They have 60 volunteers and create four student jobs.
 - They have curriculum-based programming for school groups.
 - They pivoted to online programming during the pandemic.
- Back to the Sea wants to open a community aquarium on the Dartmouth waterfront.
 - They have support from their local councillor, MLA, and MP
- Back to the Sea uses a “collect, hold, and release” philosophy.
 - All animals are held temporarily and then released (local marine life only).
 - The public can participate in animal release events.
- Back to the Sea hopes to discuss aquarium plans with NSECC in the near future.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman encourages Back to the Sea to reach out to his Dartmouth East office so he can learn more about the Dartmouth community aquarium.

4. Dylan Yates – Cape Breton Environmental Association (CBEA)

- CBEA does shoreline cleanups and removal of abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear.
 - Most people think primarily of plastic waste polluting shorelines.
 - The fishing industry is one of the main sources of waste we see on shorelines in Cape Breton and throughout Nova Scotia.
 - CBEA has removed thousands of pounds of fishing-related debris.
 - Fishing gear is designed to entrap and entangle marine life and there is a lack of recycling programs.
 - Society needs to find a use for end-of-life fishing gear.
- CBEA also works on tree-planting and illegal dump sites.
- CBEA partners with NSECC, municipalities, and other environmental organizations.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman praises the work of CBEA and would like to ask follow-up questions.
- Minister Halman encourages everyone to reach out to NSECC for follow-up meetings.

5. Brian Cho – Citizens' Climate Lobby: Halifax Chapter (CCL)

- CCL is an international bipartisan group that is focused on carbon pricing schemes.
- CCL believes carbon pricing is the most efficient way to reduce carbon emissions.
- CCL's main priority is the unification of carbon pricing policies across Canada so the use and distribution of funds generated through carbon pricing can be discussed.
- On the international level, CCL is also focused on border carbon adjustments.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks CCL for the advocacy work they are doing.
- NSECC will have some information on carbon pricing in the coming weeks and months.

6. Ashley Childs – The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)

- CMM is a tribal council that provides programs and services to the eight Mi'kmaq communities in mainland Nova Scotia.
 - Ashley represents the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) within CMM.
- DENR's mandate is to:
 - Advocate for legislative changes which reflect the Mi'kmaq concepts of Netukulimk and Etuaptmumk.
 - Prepare communities to address the impacts of climate change.
 - Plan and assist with co-management, monitoring, and stewardship efforts with federal and provincial governments.
 - Support the intergenerational transfer of Mi'kmaq knowledge through environmental stewardship and prosperity for seven generations to come.

- DENR works on a variety of projects including:
 - Mi'kmaw Forestry Initiative
 - Earth Keeper Network for Mi'kma'ki
 - Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas
 - Trail development
 - Climate adaptation and monitoring
- DENR has financial constraints which limits their ability to participate fully in these important initiatives.
 - CMM's Department of Aquatics and Fisheries Resource Management is core-funded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans AAROM program. DENR lacks such core funding.
 - DENR would like to address this funding gap so they can be more involved in initiatives such as *EGCCRA*.
- DENR would like to hear how NSECC is working to implement Mi'kmaw components and principles as stated in *EGCCRA*. DENR would be happy to work with NSECC on this.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks CMM for their comments and notes that teaching Mi'kmaw studies was one of the greatest honours of his life.
- The concepts of Netukulimk and Etuaptmumk are now enshrined in *EGCCRA*, but there is still a lot of work to do in implementing those fundamental concepts.
- Minister Halman encourages CMM to reach out so they can continue the conversation.

7. Charlene Morton – Council of Canadians: South Shore Chapter

- Council of Canadians is Canada's leading non-partisan social action organization, advocating for clean water, fair trade, green energy, public healthcare, and democracy.
- The South Shore Chapter promotes education and action on local issues and offers support to other environmental initiatives across Nova Scotia.
 - They were actively involved in the long battle to end the Alton Gas.
 - They have joined community opposition to the LNG project in Goldsboro.
 - They are founding members of the Offshore Alliance
 - They are advocates on local problems related to aquaculture, forestry, and mining.
 - They host guest speakers, panels, book launches and film screenings
- The Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia (CPONS) has actively opposed offshore oil and gas exploration since 2016. They have official support from 13 coastal municipalities.
- Council of Canadians asks Minister Halman to help stop offshore oil and gas exploration.
- Council of Canadians was disappointed to hear Minister Halman state earlier that this is not his mandate and that these concerns should be taken to Minister Rushton.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman is not absolving himself of responsibility, but there are governmental lanes. NSECC is a regulatory department. Minister Rushton is the appropriate audience.
- Minister Halman will pass on the concerns of Council of Canadians to Minister Rushton.

8. Nina Newington – Extinction Rebellion Mi'kma'ki / Nova Scotia (XR)

- XR is a global grassroots movement with the goal of getting governments to address the climate and biodiversity crises with urgency.
- In Nova Scotia, XR focuses on protecting mature natural forests.
 - These forests are the best carbon storage technologies available and also mitigate the biodiversity crisis.
 - Nova Scotia has already been devastated by industrial forestry.
- NSECC has a vital role to play in identifying lands to be protected. Minister Halman's mandate letter includes implementing the Lahey Report and protecting 20% of lands.
- Minister Halman has another 330,000 hectares to identify for protection and should listen to knowledgeable citizens about the areas they propose.
- On January 26, 2022, XR sent Minister Halman a proposal asking that the larger Last Hope area be placed under consideration for protection.
 - 20 years ago local residents persuaded Bowater Mersey to spare this area. Now the land is owned by all Nova Scotians, and the government is allowing it to be cut.
 - Some citizens have been camped out for three months to try and prevent this 24-hectare forest from being cut.
 - Five species-at-risk have been documented in the area, including mainland moose. Their habitat would already be destroyed if not for citizens camping out all winter.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks XR for their comments and advocacy work.
- Minister Halman will pass on this message to Minister Rushton.

9. Raelene Fewer – Helping Nature Heal

- Helping Nature Heal is an ecological restoration company with over 20 years of experience.
 - They work with landowners who worry about climate change risks for their homes.
 - They specialize in living shorelines as nature-based erosion mitigation strategies.
 - They work without heavy machinery to limit their environmental impact.
 - They use native and heritage species and grow many of them in their own nursery.
- Helping Nature Heal is closely watching the *Coastal Protection Act*.
 - They are glad to see setbacks and specific coastal zoning included.
 - They would like to see province-wide regulations to protect the vegetation between the shoreline and construction sites as this mitigates erosion and overland flow.
- Helping Nature Heal created the Shore Up program to teach landowners, community organizations and governments about living shoreline techniques and ecological knowledge.
 - Their pilot Shore Up project was completed in Nova Scotia in 2019.
 - They have completed five more across the Maritimes and won an award for one.
- Helping Nature Heal has had good relationships with past governments and they are looking forward to working with Minister Halman and the NSECC team.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks Helping Nature Heal for their work.
- Minister Halman asks Helping Nature Heal to reach out to discuss the Shore Up program.

10. Linda Scherzinger – KAIROS Halifax

- KAIROS is an ecumenical movement working for ecological justice and human rights.
 - They always strive to support other organizations addressing the climate crisis.
- KAIROS Halifax features:
 - A dozen members who meet monthly to share and plan.
 - 50 supporters in the Halifax area who participate in their initiatives and events.
 - Connections with local faith communities and KAIROS networks across Canada.
- KAIROS Halifax respects Mi'kmaw wisdom and work to protect land and water.
 - They lead groups in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise to provide experiential learning of Canadian history from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples.
 - They have been taking steps to learn about Mi'kmaw-settler treaty relations and they are planning to meet with the Minister of L'nu Affairs.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks KAIROS for their ecumenical work.
- Minister Halman will let the Minister of L'nu Affairs know that KAIROS will be reaching out.

11. Rebecca Parker – Nature Nova Scotia

- Nature Nova Scotia is a federation of 21 Nova Scotian nature groups.
- Nature Nova Scotia's core project areas are:
 - Wildlife and urban wildlife
 - Protected areas
 - Species at risk
 - Sustainable forestry
- Nature Nova Scotia's biggest annual project is the Celebration of Nature (late May).
 - This is an annual gathering for naturalists and nature enthusiasts featuring online speakers and field trips to natural spaces around the province.
- Nature Nova Scotia is also coordinating the Big Tree Project
 - This is a system for finding and tracking large old trees in Nova Scotia.
- Nature Nova Scotia is a member of the Bird-friendly Halifax Coalition
 - They are working with the municipality to help make the city more bird-friendly.
- Nature Nova Scotia hosts a monthly talk series to engage the public on nature topics.
- Nature Nova Scotia is currently raising funds for mainland moose research.
 - They are selling lawn signs asking the province to take action on sustainable forestry.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks Nature Nova Scotia for their work.

12. Karen Robinson & Richmond Campbell – Sandy Lake Conservation Association (SLCA)

- SLCA is working to protect the watershed of Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park.
- SLCA had two communications with NSECC in November 2021:
 - One was concerning Marsh Lake, which is owned by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. SLCA want to see that lake transferred to the park and they would like to talk to Minister Halman about that again.
 - SLCA was speaking with the new Housing Taskforce, who told SLCA that it would be better to talk to Minister Halman, which is why SLCA is here today.
- SLCA wants to tell Minister Halman about Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park and why this special area needs his help.
 - In 1971 federal biologists identified this as an outstandingly rich and diverse area that should be preserved as a regional park.
 - In the 1980s half of the area was changed from park to housing and developers bought up the land. No biological studies were done when this decision was made.
 - The park includes 11 habitats home to between 15 and 23 species-at-risk including wild Atlantic salmon and mainland moose, as well as old-growth Acadian forests.
- In November 2021, HRM councillors voted unanimously for an independent biology-based boundary study to inform the development decisions. But 600 acres in the Sandy Lake watershed are next in line for housing.
 - This would wipe away 50 years of citizens' efforts to protect this valuable area.
- SLCA was discouraged to hear Minister Halman's earlier comment about brownfields being a municipal concern and not NSECC's. SLCA asks whether NSECC could use incentives or changes to the *Environment Act* to help with these layered problems.
- SLCA asks Minister Halman to help them and listen to their proposed solutions.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks SLCA for their comments and advocacy work.
- Minister Halman states that all levels of government have to stay within their lanes, but encourages SLCA to set up a meeting so he can listen to their proposed solutions.

13. Angela Riley – Scotian Shores

- Scotian Shores is a social enterprise committed to cleaning the shorelines of Nova Scotia.
 - They connect with people across Nova Scotia who want to help clean shorelines.
- Scotian Shores has helped remove over 125,000 pounds of shoreline garbage in 2 years.
 - Most of this is fishing garbage which is not included in the EPR programs.
 - They take items and dispose of them or create trash art projects.
- Thousands of lobster bands are being dumped in the ocean but they are not considered pollution and NSECC will not do anything about it.
- Scotian Shores self-funds by reselling garbage because there is no funding available.
 - They support other cleanup groups who also cannot find funding.
- Scotian Shores is hoping to see more funding go into shoreline cleanup groups.
- Everything is “in your lane” because climate change is affecting the entire world.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks Scotian Shores for their comments and community work.
- The government is working across departmental lines. “Staying in your lane” just means that different Ministers are leads in specific areas.

Response from Angela

- Every time Scotian Shores contacts a department they are sent off to somebody else, and many different people here today have said the same. This should be fixed.

14. Maggie Bunbury – Sierra Club Atlantic

- Sierra Club Atlantic focuses on:
 - Championing climate solutions and a rapid transition to clean energy.
 - Fighting for environmental and social justice.
 - Working to protect and restore nature and endangered species.
 - Getting people outside to explore and enjoy the outdoors.
 - Promoting the conservation of resources.
- Sierra Club Atlantic launched the Beyond Coal Atlantic campaign in December 2020.
 - The campaign operates in the four Atlantic provinces.
 - The goal is to accelerate the transition towards cleaner energy sources as there is no time to waste in the race against global warming and deforestation.
 - The campaign is monitoring the energy alternatives being proposed by the four provincial governments and utility companies.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks Sierra Club Atlantic.

15. Karen McKendry – NSEN Environmental and Sustainability Education Caucus (ESEC)

- ESEC is a network of people who work, volunteer, or otherwise focus on environmental and sustainability education.
- ESEC builds capacity around environmental education both for teachers in the classroom and for informal educators outside the classroom like in museums and summer camps.
- Some ESEC members like Green Schools or Ducks Unlimited Canada create curriculum-linked resources and share them with interested teachers to provide memorable learning moments in the classroom.
- For many years ESEC has seen the lack of environmental education in the school curriculum and advocated for this gap to be filled.
- ESEC is encouraged that climate change education is now in *EGCCRA* and also in two ministerial mandate letters. ESEC would love to meet with Minister Halman again to discuss how this will be implemented and how he is working with the other department.
- ESEC would also like to discuss how NSECC could formally engage with ESEC for the first time. ESEC has an incredible wealth of knowledge and experience to share with NSECC.

Response from Minister Halman

- Education is Minister Halman’s passion outside his current government role.
- Minister Halman encourages ESEC to reach out so they can speak further.

16. Philip Gee – NSEN Climate Change Caucus

- The Climate Change Caucus is a collection of Nova Scotia organizations and individuals who work or otherwise focus on climate change issues.
- The Climate Change Caucus aims to support the efforts of all environmental groups in Nova Scotia and to promote awareness, education, and collaboration.
- The global carbon transition represents a \$45 trillion opportunity. Every climate action in Nova Scotia is a potential societal and business disruption with many benefits.
- The Climate Change Caucus believe in inclusion, just transition, equity for all, and a sustainable prosperity, where the cost of externalities are accounted for. They are optimistic that Minister Halman shares those beliefs.
- The Climate Change Caucus has already met with councillors and mayors in Nova Scotia to offer assistance as a trusted advisor, and hopes to assist Minister Halman as well.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks the Climate Change Caucus.

17. Patrick LeClair – NSEN Water Caucus

- The Water Caucus is a network of organizations that are interested in supporting water resource management in Nova Scotia.
- The Water Caucus brings together a variety of water resource organizations to share expertise and talk about issues in the province.
- The New Brunswick Environmental Network has a Watershed Caucus that works very closely with the province. In PEI they have a Watershed Alliance. This model is working in other Maritime provinces, so the Water Caucus wants to apply the model in Nova Scotia.
- In 2010 the province put together a water management plan and presented to the Water Caucus. The Water Caucus worked with the province to provide recommendations and then had ongoing meetings with the ministry to see how that was going.
 - That initiative ended in 2020, so the Water Caucus would like to meet with NSECC to discuss where the 2010-2020 plan left off and the next steps for water management.
- The Water Caucus is currently assembling a steering committee with some of Nova Scotia’s major water resource organizations. They will have their first meeting in the next month.
 - Once their priorities are set, they will set up a meeting with Minister Halman.
- The Water Caucus has already been in touch with the NSECC water division and hopes to have their support and engagement in the Water Caucus as well.

Response from Minister Halman

- Minister Halman thanks the Water Caucus.

Closing Statements

Minister Halman – NSECC

- Minister Halman commends all attendees for the work they are doing in their communities and acknowledges that there is a lot to be learned from all of them.
- Minister Halman would have liked to respond more to each speaker but wanted to make sure everyone had an opportunity to speak before the end of the meeting.
- Minister Halman and NSECC staff have taken extensive notes throughout the meeting.
- Minister Halman encourages all attendees to reach out to NSECC to set up one-on-one meetings so these conversations can continue. These meetings can start taking place after the legislature adjourns at the end of April.
- In some cases, it may be more appropriate to reach out to other Ministers who are leading on the topics in question.

Chris White – NSEN

- NSEN is grateful to Minister Halman and NSECC staff for this constructive meeting.
- There is definitely a lot of potential for NSECC and NSEN member organizations to communicate and collaborate on common focus areas.
- NSEN will help its members connect with the right people at NSECC for future correspondences.

Appendix A: NSEN Member Organizations in Attendance

Annapolis Waterkeepers



Website: <https://www.annapoliswaterkeepers.ca>

Description: We are citizens in Annapolis County threatened by ongoing toxic dumping in the Arlington wetland, which feeds all of our wells and springs. Highly contaminated leachate is shown to have escaped confinement. Our health is jeopardized. We want it to stop, and we call for a dedicated safe disposal facility for asbestos.

Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) Cape Breton



Website: <https://acapcb.ns.ca>

Description: We are an environmental non-profit organization that offers the knowledge that Cape Bretoners need to make greener choices. We work directly on practical solutions that help protect and restore our natural environment. We integrate environmental, social and economic factors into projects focusing on action, education and ecosystem planning.

Back to the Sea Society



Website: <http://backtothesea.org>

Description: We are a charity dedicated to sparking curiosity for marine life and inspiring a desire to protect our ocean. We operate the Touch Tank Hut, a miniature marine interpretive centre on the Dartmouth Waterfront, and we are working towards opening a permanent community aquarium.

Cape Breton Environmental Association



Website: <https://www.cbenviro.org/>

Description: We are a community-based environmental organization, founded in 2017 to help curb Cape Breton's ongoing illegal dumping issue. We have since grown into a diverse organization that promotes environmental awareness through education and participation in a variety of community-based environmental initiatives.

Citizens' Climate Lobby



Website: <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/>

Description: We are an international, non-partisan, grassroots organization committed to creating the political will for a liveable climate. We focus on building support for what we see as the single most impactful solution to climate change — a national carbon fee and dividend — through direct advocacy to our elected representatives, outreach to media, community influencers, and the public.

The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq



The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq

Website: <http://cmmns.com/>

Description: We are a Tribal Council located in Mi'kma'ki (present day Nova Scotia) and provides programs and services to the eight mainland Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia. Our mission is to proactively promote and assist Mi'kmaq communities' initiatives towards self-determination and enhancement of community.

Council of Canadians - South Shore



Website: <https://canadians.org/>

Description: The Council of Canadians is Canada's leading non-partisan social action organization, advocating for clean water, fair trade, green energy, public healthcare and a vibrant democracy. The South Shore Chapter also promotes education and action on issues that affect us locally. Since 2016 our Chapter has worked to protect offshore Nova Scotia from oil and gas exploration and development.

Extinction Rebellion Mi'kma'ki / Nova Scotia



Website: <https://www.facebook.com/ExtinctionRebellionNovaScotia>

Description: We are part of a leaderless, decentralised, international and apolitical network using non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act justly on the climate and ecological emergency.

Helping Nature Heal



Website: <https://helpingnatureheal.com>

Description: We are an award-winning ecological restoration company with over 20 years experience restoring ecosystems and inspiring people to connect with nature all over the Maritimes. We specialize in nature-based strategies for mitigating shoreline erosion, and teaching our techniques through our Shore Up program.

KAIROS Halifax



Website: <https://kairoscanada.org>

Description: We are Indigenous, settlers and newcomers in the HRM connected with KAIROS Canada, a national ecumenical network of ten religious churches and organisations working together for ecological justice and human rights locally and globally.

Nature Nova Scotia



Website: <https://naturens.ca>

Description: We are a registered charity and a federation of Nova Scotia's natural history clubs. We encourage communication and collaboration among naturalists, natural history societies, and other like-minded organizations in Nova Scotia. Our work centres around nature education and the protection of natural ecosystems and threatened and endangered species.

Sandy Lake Conservation Association



Sandy Lake Conservation Association

Website: <http://sandylake.org>

Description: SLCA is working to save 1800 acres of unique watershed identified in 1971 as important to be preserved in its entirety. 1000 acres are now Regional Park, but 600 acres in the watershed are next in line for housing development, putting the entire ecological value of the park at risk

Scotian Shores



Website: www.scotianshores.com

Description: We are a social enterprise committed to cleaning the shorelines and creating awareness of the ocean's plastic pollution problem. We have helped inspire thousands of Nova Scotians to join in on removing 120,000lbs (and counting!) of shoreline debris in less than 2 years!

Sierra Club Atlantic



Website: <https://sierraclub.ca/en/atlantic>

Description: We are a vibrant grassroots organization that empowers people to protect, restore, and enjoy a healthy, safe planet. We are the Atlantic chapter of Canada's only national grassroots environmental organization, working to bring your community's concerns to the attention of regional and national leaders.

NSEN Climate Change Caucus

Description: We are a collection of organizations and individuals working in, volunteering in, or interested in climate change issues. Through networking and events, our focus is on providing knowledge transfer, education and collaboration opportunities for all Provincial stakeholders looking for solutions and support.

NSEN Environmental & Sustainability Education Caucus

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/nsesec>

Description: We are a collection of organizations and individuals working in, volunteering in, or interested in environmental education and/or sustainability education. We hold monthly meetings to network and learn about current and upcoming environmental/sustainability education projects, programs and events across the province.

NSEN Water Caucus

Description: We are a collection of organizations and individuals working in, volunteering in, or interested in water issues. We hold monthly meetings to network and learn about current and upcoming water-related projects, programs and events from across the province.

Appendix B: Questions Submitted in Advance

Fossil Fuels / Just Transition

Citizens' Climate Lobby: Halifax Chapter

1. The federal carbon pollution pricing system applies in any jurisdiction that requests it or that does not implement its own system that meets federal stringency requirements. For 2022, which of the following paths will Nova Scotia take?
 - a. Continue its cap-and-trade system and increase stringency to meet federal standards
 - b. Request that the federal fee-and-dividend program apply in Nova Scotia
 - c. Emulate the federal system and keep the revenues under provincial government control
2. Our understanding is that revenues from the Nova Scotia cap-and-trade program were intended to be placed in a Green Fund.
 - a. What is the status of this fund?
 - b. Is there an accounting of what revenues were deposited to the fund and how those funds were used?
 - c. An important way of measuring the relative efficiency of climate change mitigation programs is to compute the “cost per tonne of avoided carbon emissions”. Will the province of Nova Scotia be publishing cost per tonne estimates for its own mitigation programs?

Sierra Club Atlantic

1. What is your role in the government’s Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth set to be released this spring? What avenues are at your disposal to help other Ministers and their staff ensure a just transition to clean jobs and sustainable prosperity?
2. How does the province plan to reduce emissions in line to prevent a catastrophic degree of warming, including elimination of coal-fired electricity?
3. How will “renewable energy” be defined, and will the definition include biomass?

Council of Canadians: South Shore Chapter

1. Given that recommended amendments to The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act (Bill 57) included the addition of goals to end oil and gas exploration and development in offshore Nova Scotia, do you see urgent action to eliminate oil exploration here at home as key in fulfilling our shared responsibility to recognize climate change as a global emergency (Bill 57, 4.b)—urgent action such as working with DNRR to extend the ban on oil and gas-related activity on Georges Bank, effective December 31, 2022, for another ten years or until a full moratorium is issued?
2. We know that subsidies to the oil and gas sector are part of what makes it financially feasible to continue oil and gas exploration and development here on the offshore. Will you advocate for the reduction or elimination of these subsidies?

Protected Areas / Species at Risk

Sandy Lake Conservation Association

1. Will you do what is necessary to speed up the cleanup of Montague Mines pollution and the associated pollution of Barry's Run so the subdivision that appears to have good community support can proceed there and take pressure off Sandy Lake, a valuable greenfield site which is caught in a difficult situation?
2. Will you champion changes to the Environment Act to facilitate the redevelopment of brownfield sites for housing ahead of greenfield sites?
3. Will you see that the 50 acres at Marsh Lake are transferred soon to HRM ownership to become part of the Sandy

Extinction Rebellion Mi'kma'ki / Nova Scotia

1. Given this government's laudable commitment to protecting 20% of Nova Scotia lands and waters by 2030, what process is currently in place for selecting additional areas of crown land for protection?
 - a. If a new process is being created, when can we expect to see it implemented?
 - b. Have you considered including formal provisions for citizens to nominate areas to be placed under consideration for protection?
2. Implementing the Lahey report and protecting 20% of our lands and waters are the top two items on the list in both your mandate letter and that of the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. It makes sense that both departments must be involved in implementing Lahey since protected areas are one leg of the triad. Some of the report's recommendations are particularly relevant to the process of assigning lands to the different legs of the triad, notably the implementation of landscape-level forestry planning (recommendation 13); the development of strategies on soils, birds, tourism, outdoor recreation and protected areas (16), and the necessity of a land use planning process for Western Crown Lands (36).
 - a. How does your department plan to coordinate its planning strategies for protecting another 6% of Nova Scotia (330,000 ha) with the recommendations of the Lahey report?

Nature Nova Scotia

1. The Mainland Moose Recovery Plan, which was updated last fall, clearly recommends that identified core habitat on crown lands be safeguarded through any means possible, with particular emphasis on the protected areas system. What work has been done in your department to further the designation of parcels encompassing moose habitat and what more can we expect in 2022?
2. Nature Nova Scotia and its partners are currently exploring policy, stewardship, and cultural gaps that leave some wetlands in Nova Scotia unprotected, despite Nova Scotia having some leading legislation and policy. Would you be open to meeting with our group in February 2023 to discuss the recommendations we present as part of this review?

Environmental Assessments / Regulations

Annapolis Waterkeepers

1. We are deeply concerned about the original 2005 environmental assessment for Arlington Heights C&D (which we see as highly flawed), as well as the lack of environmental assessments that should have accompanied the multiple wetland changes made at the site. This private waste disposal facility in Annapolis County has operated outside of regulations with impunity, degrading the quality of land, air, drinking water, and community health. Your Ministerial Mandate letter lists the goals of updating the environmental assessment legislation, remediating contaminated sites and eliminating unnecessary greenhouse gasses; all three of which apply to Arlington Heights.
 - a. Are you willing to engage further with organized citizens on the ongoing Arlington Heights issue?
 - b. Will you consider our recommendation that you launch an open and independent investigation into these environmental assessment issues? This will also serve to inform deliberations about Environment Act amendments; specifically, how to strengthen citizen protections and provide for the restoration of environmental and community health.
2. Given widespread problems with under-regulated private waste disposal in our province, particularly around asbestos like at the Arlington Heights and Torbrook Landfills, are you considering a single, provincially-controlled safe incineration site for asbestos?
3. The wetland at the Arlington Heights site sources approximately 25 immediately downslope wells and springs. Testing has revealed that contaminants have escaped containment in the vicinity of these wells and springs. From our 2500-page FOIPOP we have documented more than 150 sampling events where hazardous substances massively exceeded Canadian Drinking Water limits. Our health is jeopardized, yet the department continues to assure us that there is no reason for concern.
 - a. Will your department finally recognize our community water supply that is the Arlington Wetland and commit to rigorous and regular well-testing for community members?

KAIROS Halifax

1. Thank you for designating the French River Watershed as a protected water area. Clean water is Nova Scotia's most essential resource for present and future generations, and residents of that area are greatly relieved that you have protected their water. There are five other large-scale gold mining projects along the Eastern shore, ongoing or planned, that threaten to contaminate other watersheds. Atlantic Gold was recently fined \$250,000 after pleading guilty to releasing harmful substances into nearby bodies of water, highlighting the importance of environmental regulation and industry reporting when the safety of our province's water is at stake. Millbrook First Nation, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, and local residents, are expressing opposition. These open pit gold mines are currently undergoing joint provincial-federal environmental assessments.
 - a. How will you protect our gift of clean water along the Eastern Shore from the short term and long term risks of contamination from gold mining?

Environmental Education

Environmental & Sustainability Education Caucus

1. How are you working with the Department of Education on incorporating environmental education in the curriculum at all grade levels?
2. So far, how has your work on environmental education in the curriculum benefited from working with stakeholders from outside government?

Engagement and Support for Environmental Organizations

Climate Change Caucus

1. *EGCCRA* acknowledges that climate change is a “global emergency requiring urgent action”, with a large focus on community inclusion and education. With so many knowledge groups and people within citizen-led organizations, how are you planning on expanding this consultation, including timing and process of identifying which groups to work with in the community? We want to help.

Scotian Shores

1. Are there plans to increase accessible funding for environmental non-profits and businesses doing work to heal nature across Nova Scotia?

Nova Scotia Environmental Network (on behalf of multiple NSEN members)

1. What is the status of the funds that were formerly held in the Environmental Trust Fund before the previous government repealed the Nova Scotia Environmental Trust Regulations in January 2021?
 - a. How are the funds being disbursed for the benefit of environmental organizations?