



Report #9 from the Steering Committee

April 9 2009

CHEBUCTO WILDERNESS COALITION

The NDP Makes it Unanimous

On January 24th Coalition representatives Tom Musial, Rich Campbell, Mike Marriott, Beth McGee, and Geoff LeBoutillier met with NS NDP Leader Darrell Dexter and MLA Bill Estabrooks. The NDP representatives enthusiastically expressed their support for the project, and the meeting focused on specific, non-partisan ways the wilderness initiative could move forward.

In a follow-up letter, Mr. Dexter wrote,

Legislation to protect these lands is vital to preserving its great natural and historical value. These lands provide unique opportunities for recreation and ecotourism within a major urban context and will create a green belt of protected wilderness within reach of residents and visitors while bringing economic benefits to the area.

Protecting these natural areas surrounding the urban core of Halifax-Dartmouth will also preserve the area's water quality and increase biodiversity conservation in the region.

Chebucto Wilderness Coalition is to be commended for its efforts over the past seven years to organize and develop an infrastructure of community cooperation by bringing together individuals and groups to discuss issues and arrive at a consensus. This strong foundation is a model of successful community planning.

Again, I urge support of this important project.

Earlier in his career in Dartmouth, Mr. Dexter had considerable experience on the ground with efforts to preserve public land, and Mr. Estabrooks, who has had a first-hand involvement in the work of FBWHT and WRWEO since their very beginnings, knew precisely the challenges faced and rewards which await the CWC as the Chebucto Wilderness becomes a reality. Both elected officials have been long-time supporters of the Council of Community Organizations (COCO).

The political will to protect 9,800 hectares under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act is clear. The community support for protection of these lands is emphatic. The technical analysis required under the Act is in process. The path leading to the present administration's goal of legally protecting 12% of Nova Scotia's landmass by 2015 is becoming well-defined on the Chebucto Peninsula.

The following endorsements are now on file with the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition:

- HRM Western Region Council
- HRM Regional Council (reported in letter from Municipal Clerk dated June 30, 2008)
- Bill Estabrooks, MLA, Timberlea-Prospect
- Judy Streach, MLA, Chester-St. Margaret's
- Department of Natural Resources (in principle, based on preliminary assessment)
- Department of Environment (in principle, now conducting a assessment report)
- Stephen McNeil on behalf of the Liberal Caucus
- Darrell Dexter on behalf of the NDP Caucus
- Geoff Regan, MP for Halifax West