



May 28, 2024

Good evening, my name is Melissa Cameron and I am the Executive Director of Island Nature Trust and I will be joined this evening by our Land Stewardship Manager, Kaylee Busniuk.

We'd like to begin with extending our thanks to the Forestry Commission for the opportunity to present this evening.

Bonsoir, nous tenons à remercier la commission pour la chance de partager notre présentation avec vous ce soir.

A brief overview of the Trust:

INT was established in 1979 with the mission to create a legacy of natural areas and wildlife habitats for future generations. As a landowner with over 11,000 acres currently protected across the island by the Natural Areas Protection Act, and stewarded by the Trust, we are currently one of the largest private landowners in the province and the third largest landowner overall. This is a responsibility and a privilege that we take to heart.

With over 100 different parcels of land that span the entire province, INT staff have a unique opportunity to observe natural areas across our island. Our stewardship team completes comprehensive surveys of forested areas, wetlands, coastal ecosystems, and riparian zones. These surveys capture important changes over time to the environment and to species in our diverse ecosystems. After post-tropical storm Fiona, the Trust spent hundreds of hours

assessing the impact of this major climate event and our ongoing work in forested landscapes involves increasing climate resiliency through ecological silviculture and other restoration work. We are grateful for both the public and private funding that we receive, however we stress that the scope of work is immense and chronically underfunded.

And, while 11,000 acres may seem like a vast amount of land, we'd like to add some context. Currently, 86% of PEI is privately owned. With COPP 15 goals of 30% land and marine protection by 2030, our province has yet to reach its own land protection goal of 7%.

As the most densely populated province in Canada, these goals are critical to the wellbeing of the island ecosystems and islanders. We are all dependent on the health of our island and of its natural heritage.

Natural areas that are protected from human disturbance offer our island communities a wealth of benefits. These benefits are categorized as ecosystem services, which offer provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural returns. To make these benefits more tangible, one can envision the forest as a sponge soaking up extra water and carbon dioxide or the mental and emotional benefits from walking in nature.

It is the collective conclusion of the Trust that the forestry practices of the past must evolve to address the unique and challenging circumstances of our Island. Climate change has a direct impact on biodiversity loss and its deleterious effects are amplified in our heavily disturbed ecosystems and our population growth only exacerbates this issue. The time to act is now and the Trust is

encouraged by this opportunity to come together across the province and address these issues head on.

This evening we'd like to share with the Commission the most impactful takeaways for Island Nature Trust from the Forestry Commission Report and add a few additional points we'd like to offer for consideration.