

June 28, 2009

Hon. Sterling Belliveau
Minister of the Environment
5151 Terminal Road
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Belliveau,

This is the second letter from the Round Table constituted under the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) of 2007. As you will know, the Round Table is composed of 19 people representing diverse and important components of our society. The Round Table members believe strongly in sustainable prosperity as an overarching development strategy. Among other things, the Round Table is required to provide an annual assessment of the progress made by the Provincial Government in achieving the goals and targets set out in that Act. The scope of the legislation as well as its requirements for transparency and accountability were noteworthy at the time of promulgation and continue to be so today.

The Round Table concludes that the Provincial Government is continuing to make solid progress in many aspects of the Act. For example, we note the progress in protecting natural areas such as Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area. The establishment of the Crown Share Land Legacy Trust and the Conservation Property Tax Exemption Act are particularly noteworthy.

On climate change, we commend the Provincial Government for releasing the much anticipated climate change action plan with its 68 recommendations. It is noteworthy that the plan was generally well received by stakeholders. We look forward to the implementation of the sustainable procurement policy, as it is expected to influence the environmentally and socially responsible disposition of millions of dollars expended by governments for many years to come. The Round Table will be very interested in the nature of the criteria used for assessing and integrating the social, environmental and economic costs and benefits of purchasing decisions.

We are pleased to see continuing progress in the reduction of nitrogen oxide emissions especially by Nova Scotia Power Inc. The target of 20 percent reduction in 2009 from the 2000 base year should be met this year.

Regarding the goal to develop a no net loss wetland policy by 2009, the Round Table believes that the Government is on track to meet the target set in the Act and looks forward to the release of the policy accompanied by clear and workable definitions of wetlands later this year.

With regard to one goal that had been established for 2008, namely that “municipal drinking water supplies will meet the Province’s treatment standards by the year 2008”, the Round Table remains concerned that only 60% of municipalities have met the

deadline. The public should be better informed of plans to provide residents in the affected municipalities with the necessary confidence in the improvement in their water supplies and other actions may have to be considered by Government.

The Round Table recognizes that the announced changes in the Building Code will result in energy efficiency improvements in existing and new homes as well as small commercial buildings. However we encourage the stakeholders, including Government, to consider adopting mandatory labeling of buildings in the future as originally intended. Many leading jurisdictions have chosen to go that route in part because of the educational value for buyers of homes and buildings.

The Round Table continues to encourage the Provincial Government and other stakeholders to move forward more aggressively on energy efficiency and conservation. In particular we strongly urge the responsible authorities to establish and staff the electricity demand side management agency without delay.

The Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act sets out some ambitious goals for 2010 regarding the adoption of resource management strategies for water, forestry, mining, parks and biodiversity. These strategies will be critical to the Province's success in its stated objective of sustainable prosperity, providing certainty to all sectors of the economy. As a group established to advise the Minister and the Government on the implementation of this landmark piece of legislation, the Round Table exhorts Government to do more to identify indicators and implement measures that advance the objective of integrating environmental sustainability and economic prosperity in a transparent manner. We would like to see the integrated approach reflected in next year's report.

Lastly, we encourage the Provincial Government to communicate the rationale for the Act and the progress being made in implementing it more broadly to Nova Scotians. We applaud the creation of the Second Nature website but believe it must be promoted more widely and supported by other initiatives. Only by involving all Nova Scotians and all sectors of the economy will we reach our objective of demonstrating "international leadership by having one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments by 2020" while also improving our economy.

Yours sincerely,



Raymond P. Côté
Chair