



Adventure in every step

March 9, 2015

Bob Petrie
Director of Wildlife
NS Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 698
Halifax, NS B3J 2T9

RE: Sunday hunting consultation

Dear Mr. Petrie,

On behalf of Hike Nova Scotia, I am writing to oppose lifting the ban on Sunday hunting in Nova Scotia. However, we'd like to stress that we are not anti-hunting, only concerned about safe access to hiking.

Our organization, which represents over 2,700 Nova Scotians but advocates on behalf of all Nova Scotians who use the outdoors for walking, hiking and snowshoeing, is against lifting the ban for numerous reasons. We feel this debate has not evolved since 2011, the last time that Sunday hunting was in the spotlight. An extra day to hunt, possible population management, and possible additional revenue do not make enough of a valid argument, when the number of hikers and outdoor enthusiasts greatly outweigh those that hunt.

There is no evidence provided by the Department that lifting the ban on Sunday hunting in other jurisdictions has increased hunting – and therefore wildlife management – nor increased revenue.

During the fall rifle hunting season, organized hikes in wilderness areas are primarily limited to Sundays. We are hearing from organizers that lifting the ban on Sunday hunting will place many of these activities in jeopardy, due to the perception of increased risk to hikers. Sunday is the one day a week during hunting season that we don't have to worry about this particular safety issue. Our mandate is to promote walking, hiking, and snowshoeing as safe and enjoyable activities. Lifting the Sunday hunting ban is contradictory to our mandate, as it will discourage new walkers and hikers from taking part. Real and perceived safety concerns would keep many people from venturing into the woods on Sunday.

Safety is paramount for not only recreational hikers, but trail volunteers. Fall trail maintenance is extremely important to ensure safe conditions during snowshoe season. Sunday is assured as a safe trail building and maintenance day for volunteers during this busy season. Lifting the ban on Sunday hunting would threaten this activity, and the condition of trails in general.

About 70 per cent of land in the province is privately owned. This is one of the highest, if not the highest rate of private ownership in the country. We know that hunters stray onto private land while hunting. Sunday is one of the only days on which landowners can safely enjoy their land with confidence and without fear of stray bullets.



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Hiking is one of the best activities to enjoy during our beautiful fall season, and we do not want this in jeopardy. Many recreational users travel within Nova Scotia during this season to hike on Sundays. They spend significant amounts on outdoor gear and in communities close to the trails. We fear that lifting the Sunday hunting ban will negatively impact local and rural businesses, as less people will be on the trails. In addition, we believe allowing Sunday hunting flies in the face of promoting our fall season for tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities – thus having an even greater negative impact on revenues.

The decision about whether to lift the ban on Sunday hunting should be considered within the context of all of the Department of Natural Resources' responsibilities, including to the provincial Thrive! Strategy. Thrive! A plan for a healthier Nova Scotia, calls for leadership across government to ensure that policies are in place that support our health where we live, learn, work, commute, and play. DNR could show leadership by encouraging walking and hiking, and creating a culture of being active in nature, as two of the most important ways that we can address the crisis of inactivity and preventable chronic disease that impact health of Nova Scotians, as well as the future prosperity and success of the entire province.

We should look to the concerns and the rights of the majority rather than the minority. There are far more people who recreate in the outdoors than those who hunt. Overall, Hike Nova Scotia is against lifting the Sunday hunting ban for the reasons stated above. We appreciate your invitation to comment on this issue. On behalf of our membership, I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Garnet McLaughlin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light blue rectangular box.

Garnet McLaughlin,
President
Hike Nova Scotia