

Letter to the editor, Chronicle Herald
Submitted December 6th 2012

In response to: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/222483-ns-slams-short-notice-on-altered-waterways-act>

Megan Leslie is absolutely justified in saying that three days' notice for the province of NS to submit comments on changes to the Navigable Waters Act is unacceptable. I would add that this was an underhanded approach to steamroll massive changes to environmental legislation through parliament and yet again make a mockery of public consultation and democracy. Rivers such as the Annapolis, the Mersey, the Liscomb, the Salmon River, Loch Lomond and the Birch Cove Lakes will no longer have any protection for navigation under the new Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA). Enacted in 1882 the NWPA protects the rights of Canadians to navigate Canada's waterways without interference from bridges, pipelines, dams, logging operations and other forms of industrial development. With the new changes to legislation, only a handful of lakes and rivers will be protected while the remaining 90% of watercourses in Canada are now at the mercy of development that could obstruct, pump out and generally lead to the deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and the species that rely on them. Make no mistake that this will affect recreational boating opportunities and tourism, fishing and angling and ecosystem integrity, amongst others. Picture a quiet evening on the dock at your lakefront-cottage, now turned into a swampy pond due to lowered water levels from a new dam built upstream without notice. Paddlers may be suddenly vexed to find a new bridge, also built without approval, blocking their passage. Changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act which follow on the heels of other sweeping changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the Fisheries Act are putting our lakes, rivers, and streams, the lifeblood of our nation at risk of serious and irreversible harm.

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