Send to:

John White, Minister of Housing - housingminister@novascotia.ca

Copy to:

Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia - premier@novascotia.ca

Your MLA – Find your MLA's contact details here: https://enstools.electionsnovascotia.ca/edinfo/

Marnie Cluckie, CAO of HRM: caooffice@halifax.ca

Save Sandy Lake campaign: sandylakecampaign@gmail.com

I'm writing to you today to express my concern with the provincial Task Force on Housing's decision to fast-track planning for housing development at Sandy Lake. I disagree with this decision. The same area is part of a proposed expansion of Sandy Lake Regional Park and is an Important Wildlife Corridor in the Halifax Green Network Plan, but those plans have not yet been implemented. These plans to preserve the needed area have been cut short by the province's designation of the area as a Special Planning Area. That area contains key lands, wetlands, and tributaries that determine the ecological health of the entire watershed through to the Sackville River, including the beloved Sandy Lake Park and its supervised beach. The area is remarkably biodiverse and needs to stay wild to continue to be an outstanding area for nature conservation. We need to address the housing crisis, but it cannot be at the expense of the climate and biodiversity crises!

There is a wealth of information about the ecology of Sandy Lake, Sackville River, and the ecosystems that surround them. Sandy Lake is a vital lake ecosystem, and the land surrounding the lake hosts some of the last old-growth forests left in the Halifax Regional Municipality. These lands are also home to at least 16 Species at Risk, including Wild Atlantic Salmon that have been returned to Sandy Lake (thanks to years of work by the Sackville Rivers Association. HRM even commissioned a study to examine the area's ecological values, and HRM has committed to proposing an expanded boundary for Sandy Lake Regional Park based on ecological features. The province's decision to develop at Sandy Lake is premature and is dismissive of this important work. Any decision to put houses at Sandy Lake flies in the face of all of these values and processes.

Development in the area will cause us to lose the exceptional natural features that make this place a haven for people and wildlife. Developing this space is exactly the opposite of what we need from our government during a climate emergency and biodiversity crises.

I call on you to remove Sandy Lake from the "Special Planning Areas" list and instead give the area the protection it deserves.

Thank you for your time, I will be watching this issue closely.