

Broad opposition to fast-tracking development at Sandy Lake

Task Force on Housing has selected an area that should be parkland

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Mi'kmaki (Nova Scotia) - A 29-group coalition of community organizations, environmental charities, scientists, and citizens have come out against a decision by the provincial Task Force on Housing to fast-track development planning at Sandy Lake in Bedford.

The area selected would be developed for up to 6,000 housing units (houses and/or apartment units) along Hammonds Plains Road, beside Sandy Lake, and add about 6,000 cars to already crowded Hammonds Plains Road. The Task Force's decision means development planning studies for it will be completed soon, ahead of the HRM Regional Plan timetable. It will allow development to be planned before all information needed to decide the fate of the area has been considered. The same area is proposed for expansion of Sandy Lake Regional Park, and has an Important Wildlife Corridor in the Halifax Green Network Plan, but those HRM plans have not been implemented.

Sandy Lake is also a headwaters area for the Sackville River, so development next to Sandy Lake threatens the extensive Atlantic Salmon recovery efforts of the Sackville River Association. More development in the Sandy Lake watershed risks ruining the lake for swimming, an outcome that has befallen other lakes in HRM.

Karen Robinson, co-chair of the Sandy Lake – Sackville River Regional Park Coalition, continues to voice the view of the Coalition that the 1,800 acres of wilderness next to Sandy Lake and Sackville River should be parkland instead of pavement. "The lands and waters in the Sandy Lake – Sackville River host exceptionally high biodiversity, old growth forests, species at risk habitat, and important wildlife corridors. The area has all the elements we need to protect, right now, in order to save ourselves and the species around us. This place serves us all better as park than urban sprawl development."

The Coalition wants people who know and love the area, or those who are responding to the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, to speak up for Sandy Lake and Sackville River.

"Our groups recognize the need for housing in HRM, but there are places that are not suitable for housing – like Sandy Lake – because these areas are outstanding for the other things we value in 2022, and even need to survive."

Website: <https://www.sandylakecoalition.ca/>

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