

National Advisory Panel on Marine Protected Area Standards

Nova Scotia Presentation

Premier Stephen McNeil

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Delta Beauséjour
750 Main St.
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Distinguished panelists, good afternoon, and thank you for

allowing me to speak with you today.

I wanted to be here because the subject of Marine Protected Areas is of vital interest to Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia is defined by the ocean.

It has been a pillar of our economy throughout our history . . . and it remains one of our strongest competitive advantages today.

Generations of Nova Scotians – from one end of our province to the other – have made their living from the ocean.

And we rely on the ocean today.

More than 11,500 people are directly employed in the fishery. We lead the country in seafood exports.

Aquaculture is a growth industry in our province, and so is marine plant harvesting.

We are home to the Bedford Institute for Oceanography, the country's largest centre for ocean research.

There are more than 300 ocean technology companies in Nova Scotia.

I can assure you – if anyone knows the importance of taking care of the ocean, it's Nova Scotians.

It's why we are already a leader in ocean protection.

Nova Scotia has recognized the importance of the fishing grounds of George's Bank by extending an oil and gas exploration moratorium.

We have two marine protected areas, and seven marine refuges.

We want to work with the federal government on marine protected areas.

At the same time, Nova Scotians also deserve the opportunity to maximize the value of our resources off our coast.

We have seen varied industries and activities coexist off our shores for many years.

We want to see that continue.

And we know it can in a responsible and sustainable way.

We've seen a good example of that coexistence for the last 20 years in the Western Emerald Banks Conservation area, also known as the Haddock Box – a marine refuge, not marine protected area.

Groundfishing is off limits in this marine refuge, but other types of fishing are permitted.

And, there has been exploration activity in the Haddock Box, with four wells drilled and 13 seismic surveys.

It shows that the two industries can coexist with sound and responsible management.

Why change that now?

What evidence is there to suggest that what has been happening in this area for decades is no longer sustainable?

We are also concerned that we have not seen clear conservation objectives for the proposed marine protected areas.

For example, the Eastern Shore Islands has been identified by the federal government as an area of interest for conservation.

The waters around those islands have been fished for generations.

And new discoveries in seaweed and rockweed highlight progress in ocean innovation and technology.

Companies are investing millions in these industries.

But because DFO has expressed interest in protecting this area, it has created a level of concern and confusion.

The Eastern Shore Islands area is 2,000 square kilometres in size, far larger than the two to 10 square kilometres seen elsewhere in Atlantic Canada.

It's a lucrative fishing ground.

Those fishermen are worried their livelihoods could be taken away.

And they're wondering why.

These two examples – the Haddock Box and Eastern Shore Islands – highlight one of Nova Scotia's concerns with the federal approach to marine protected areas.

That concern is the lack of evidence for change.

To date, we are not seeing decisions based on science, research and facts.

Underscoring that point is the federal government's own language in the proposed changes to the Oceans Act — Bill C-55.

The legislation says that the minister, in designating a marine protected area,

“shall not use lack of scientific certainty regarding the risks posed by any activity that may be carried out in certain areas of the sea as a reason to postpone or refrain from exercising their powers.”

So, if decisions are not going to be based on science, it begs the question — on what will they be based?

These questions and issues are creating a climate of uncertainty for those who may be looking to invest in our offshore.

Whether it's in the fishery or the oil and gas industry, the churn that has been created can make investors think twice about doing business in Nova Scotia.

That's bad for our province, and for Canada.

In Nova Scotia, we are working extremely hard every day to find ways of growing our economy.

Maximizing our resources is one way we can do that.

We know there's oil and gas off our shores.

We have invested close to \$50 million in offshore geoscience.

We're confident we can get a good return on that investment.

Because the science tells us that Nova Scotia's offshore holds an estimated 8 billion untapped barrels of oil . . . and 120 trillion cubic feet of undeveloped gas.

I was in Houston at the Offshore Technology Conference earlier this week, where many leaders in the energy industry gathered.

And I can tell you many of them are aware of Nova Scotia's potential.

We need to restore certainty around investing in our region.

That's why we called for a 30-day pause around calls for bids in our offshore.

We know all the sectors who access our offshore can coexist and we want the federal government to send the same message.

We're only going to see the activity in the ocean increase.

We in Nova Scotia, and the whole Atlantic region, were thrilled when the federal government announced earlier this year that we would be home to an Ocean Supercluster.

It's a vote of confidence in our region, and it reflects an acknowledgement of how critical the ocean is to our future.

We fully understand and appreciate the value of healthy oceans.

It is linked directly to our economy.

We do not want to jeopardize our offshore; nor do we want to jeopardize our economy.

We have experience in Nova Scotia with various sectors being able to coexist off our shores.

We know the International Union for Conservation of Nature specifically says aquaculture and marine protected areas can coexist.

Nova Scotia has received tremendous benefits from the offshore.

Last year, our seafood exports reached \$2 billion.

Over the last two decades, we've received \$4 billion in revenue from petroleum projects, and \$5 billion more has been spent on goods, services and work commitments.

All of this activity has meant real economic opportunity and real jobs for Nova Scotians.

There's potential for much more.

We can't afford to put that at risk with decisions that are not based on evidence.

In closing, I want to assure the panel that I in my province — and I know other Premiers in this region — have always made environmental protection a priority.

We have created a climate where we protect what is essential for our future and at the same time allowed industries to access the resources that are available.

I urge the panel to review the facts, the science and the research in making any recommendations.

Anything less would be a disservice to a region that knows the value of a healthy ocean.

Thank you for your time.