

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday April 4, 2022

“Secrets and backroom discussions will seal the deal on losing an HRM climate-change powerhouse. Rally on April 9.”

Last week the Save our Southdale Wetland Society announced that we were concerned by a provincial government announcement on fast-tracking proposed development on the site of the Eisner Cove Wetland.

This week, with more information on the HRM Housing Task Force, our concern has turned to outrage.

We have read Bill 63, the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act, which came into law on November 5 2021. As an act of government, it is appalling. The appointed task force of 5 people works behind closed doors. They can recommend any development to the Minister for action. The Minister is not required to hold any form of public consultation, and can deem any of the usual planning assessments to be unnecessary. The Minister then takes the place of the HRM City Council in issuing permits and approvals, which are then binding on the Municipality and cannot be appealed.

“Whatever leverage HRM has at Southdale and at the other designated areas has been significantly weakened by the Province’s move. Developers now know that if they don’t like what HRM planning is asking them to do, they have the ability to take their case directly to the Taskforce.... That’s ’s particularly problematic for sites that have more uncertainty as to what the best path forward is, sites like Southdale.” – *Sam Austin, HRM City Councillor, March Newsletter*

What this means for the Eisner Cove Wetland is disaster. The Province has already announced that the Southdale / Eisner Cove Wetland development will be shovel-ready by September 2022. The short timeframe means that planning for revisions to provide better protection for the wetland will either be shortchanged or not take place at all.

“There are so many unanswered questions still, about the effects of the destruction of the forest, increased flow of stormwater, and pollution from construction and habitation on the wetland. There has been no Environmental Assessment at all.” – *Dr. Tara LaPointe, concerned citizen.*

“There is no avenue now for public concerns and questions to be raised. The meetings have all been behind closed doors, between the Task Force and the deep-pocket developers. There is no place for the views and wishes of the public in this secret process.” – *Bill Zebedee, President, Save Our Southdale Wetland Society.*

And there is no stated intention for any of the fast-tracked developments to be climate-change-conscious. Who is looking at the link between killing the Eisner Cove Wetland and the greenhouse gas emissions this will release? No one. Who is calculating the cost of lost carbon storage? No one. Who is looking for potential loss of Species at Risk? No one.

If the Task Force does what it says it will - push forward with the Eisner Cove / Southdale development by fall 2022 - HRM will gain a few hundred not-really-affordable housing units and lose one of its greatest weapons against climate change.

The Save Our Southdale Wetland Society would like to invite anyone who shares our concerns about the loss of sensitive ecosystems, or the loss of the public voice, to a rally. The rally will be held on Saturday April 9, 2022, from 1 to 3 pm, at the intersection of Mount Hope Avenue and Highway 111 in Dartmouth.



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Protect Our Southdale Wetland Society

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