



Presenting Science to Nova Scotians since 1862

c/o 18 Remington Court
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3M 3Y6
June 13, 2012

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

The Nova Scotian Institute of Science (NSIS) is an organization which has promoted science in Nova Scotia for 150 years. Its monthly lecture series provides an opportunity for members of the public and professional scientists to hear about new research developments in areas as diverse as petroleum exploration, parks and protected areas, ecology, and water quality. The Institute's members include scientists, teachers, librarians, and members of the general public.

The Institute is concerned about the very negative impact that the proposed legislation in Bill C-38 will have on the protection of fisheries and the environment. The Bill essentially removes habitat protection measures from the current Fisheries Act and restricts protection to species of commercial, recreational and aboriginal importance.

In the same Bill, the replacement of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA), including the modifications to the environmental assessment process, would essentially reduce its rigour and lead to negative impacts on the terrestrial, aquatic and atmospheric environments.

Environmental regulatory mechanisms can only be informed by good fundamental research and communication of the results of that research. However, in recent years, federal scientists have been increasingly restricted in their freedom to speak to the public and the media about the results of their work. This is entirely contrary to the principles of scientific research, peer-review and dissemination of research results. Scientists should be able to speak about their work freely and not be prohibited from doing so.

The Nova Scotian Institute of Science urges the Federal Government to reconsider the proposed changes to the CEAA and the Fisheries Act embodied in Bill C-38. The Institute also contends that scientists in the employ of the Canadian federal government and its agencies must be permitted to speak freely about the results of their work.

Sincerely,

Michelle Paon
President, Nova Scotian Institute of Science