

Rural Municipality of Belfast

December 13, 2019

Minister of Land and Public Safety: Honourable Bloyce Thompson

Minister of Infrastructure: Honourable Steven Meyers

Minister of Finance and our MLA: Honourable Darlene Compton

Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Honourable Jamie Fox

Re: **Lack of Community Consultation**
Blocking Public Access at Pioneer Cemetery Road, Wood Islands

Dear Ministers,

It has been brought to our attention by local residents that historic access to the Northumberland Strait shore via Pioneer Cemetery Road in Wood Islands (within our municipal boundaries) has been severely compromised by a rock barricade. Historically, water and seashore access has been provided to people in the region for recreation and for resources provided there.

Concurring with the residents who brought this matter to our attention, we, the Rural Municipality of Belfast, are disappointed in the provincial permitting process that allowed for a loss of safe access to the shore, located at the foot of Pioneer Cemetery Road, without any public consultation or discussion about:

- the need for the Rock Barrier
- possible alternatives
- other access solutions/ideas
- or even what the situation was that is making the Provinces actions necessary

Please see accompanying photographs. The buildup of a 25-foot rock wall at the base of the road in Wood Islands seems to obscure any potential access or traditional use of this water front. We are advised that this rock structure was designed and funded by Bell Aliant to protect an armoured-fibre cable that might have been better buried. We are also advised that some of the stones have already begun to move, and that sand deposits have changed. including some sand loss.

With a public meeting, some concerns that could have been raised include:

- Was there any thought put into the development of the barrier, in respects to the tidal action in this area?
- What about continued public access or whether it was still a viable option?
- Was there any thought to making Council and the area residents aware that the Province was intending to place the Rock Wall and Cease Public Access?
- The addition of non-native amour stone to the shoreline and deletion of a long-standing slip way for the benefit of a private corporation seems like something that should have had more public input before work began!

This design seems not to have considered full impacts (access, environmental, social, utility, etc.) nor newer or less intrusive options such as fencing or trenching. So that we may understand the permitting process, the care and concern taken, please advise of the assessments done and options considered in the permitting process.

All of these matters could have been discussed/explained during a public meeting and other possible mitigations may have been arrived at? i.e. Council would like a public access staircase of some sort considered at minimum to be able to access the beach.

We understand and support access being limited or revoked when shoreline safety is a concern or when critical habitat must be protected at specific times of the year or when a species is at risk. Provincial and Corporate change-of-use activity on public lands, however, needs to be differently analyzed and brought to the public for discussions to avoid residents' outcry.

We look forward to your response including information about this specific permit and remedial actions, such as a staircase for public access so that we can bring further information to our concerned residents and consider any further actions if any.

Thank you.

Sincerely



Garth Gillis – Mayor
Rural Municipality of Belfast