

January 3 letter to the editor (saltwire)

Re Bill Black's column on Liberal leader candidate Iain Rankin

Iain Rankin is busy green-washing his persona, but the tarnish of his past as NS Minister of Lands & Forestry (2018 – 2020) steadfastly clings to the liberal leader candidate. Nova Scotia is losing public access to shores and beaches. Less than 5% of our coastline is protected for future generations.

And yet, Mr. Rankin was all-in with a sleazy scheme to a bargain-basement hand-over of 700-acres of our coastline. He played a key role, in partnership with the premier, in the secret, backroom delisting of Owl's Head Provincial Park Reserve. With the understanding, that once unencumbered by the category of Protected, it would be sold to an American billionaire. The price tag, an insulting \$216,000 for a globally rare, coastal ecosystem, just under \$310 per acre.

That this was done in secret, and only unearthed a couple of years later by the media, does not bode well for Mr. Rankin's transparency. I do not believe, as he's hinted, he was forced to toe the party line in this matter. Otherwise, the former Minister of Lands & Forestry (and before that, Minister of Environment) would have publicly apologized for his underhanded actions and been convincing in his resolve to do better.

Apparently, the scheme's goal is to turn Owl's Head into prestigious golf courses and an upscale residential development with the promise of jobs – always the pie-in-the-sky-carrot-dangling of smooth-talking "corporate captured" politicians. Full-time jobs at a golf course on the shore . . . not likely.

The ecocidal nature of destroying Owl's Head Provincial Park for a few elite players forever removes this golf course dream from the "environmentally sensitive" description Mr. Rankin is suggesting. The unleashing of destruction led by a parade of heavy-construction equipment; rigorous dynamiting and on-site manufacturing of sand come to mind. Followed by squandering of fresh water and the spraying of glyphosate-based pesticides to keep those plastic greens looking pristine. There is a host of successful class action suits against the carcinogenic glyphosate. Will Mr. Rankin's budget afford such penalties?

And there's the matter of Clear-cutting on Crown Land and the blatant disregard of the Protected Species Act. Mr. Rankin has been enabling industry to slash and cut with nary a thought about the resulting environmental disaster generated including destruction of habitat; soil erosion by water run-off; harming of waterways, aquatic life - the very air we breathe.

Why the destruction of our Acadian Forests to be replaced by mono-culture tree plantations? For the most part to turn into so-called "biomass." Despite its name, this product is not in any way environmentally sound.

Biomass burning produces 50 per cent more carbon dioxide than coal because it burns less efficiently. Tree plantations (which are not forests) require aerial spraying of glyphosate-based pesticides that destroy everything – Everything – but the typically fast-growing spruce. Clear-cutting fuels climate change. Spruce cannot handle the increased temperatures of climate change.

Mr. Rankin has an exceptional opportunity. By re-listing and protecting Owl's Head Provincial Park and by calling a moratorium on the insatiable Westfor-led onslaught of our Acadian Forests, allowing time for a carefully considered sustainable eco-forestry plan, he would have the added benefit of presenting a truth-based environmental platform while easing the ever-worsening climate crisis.

I support responsible and sustainable development and jobs that will enhance, rather than abuse, our province. Judging from Mr. Rankin's choices as Minister of Lands & Forestry, I fear the Golf Club Management Diploma-holder has neither the imagination or sense of responsibility to the environment and indeed the future, to make this happen. Tragically, he is blind to all but making a short-term, fast buck and his cling to power.

To quote Danny George, a 40 year forester from Cape Breton Island, "The Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry is a PR department for the pulpwood industry. Biomass is not green power. Biomass is the new coal in terms of pollution."

As for Iain Rankin, he's simply a PR department for himself.

Jodie Turner