

Fisher, Darren - M.P.

From: Fisher, Darren - M.P.
Sent: October 14, 2025 8:19 AM
To: Minister / Ministre (DFO/MPO)
Subject: Request to Refuse Fisheries Act Authorization for Infill Project in Dartmouth Cove (Project 2022-206446)

The Honourable Joanne Thompson
Minister of Fisheries
Ottawa, ON

Re: Request to Refuse Fisheries Act Authorization for Infill Project in Dartmouth Cove (Project 2022-206446)

Minister Thompson,

I am writing to urge you, under the authority of the *Fisheries Act*, to refuse any authorization for the proposed infill project in Dartmouth Cove (Project 2022-206446).

This project has been the subject of sustained opposition from residents, local stakeholders, community groups, and the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). In their correspondence to your predecessor, copied to my office, a significant number of constituents and stakeholders expressed concerns not only about the harmful impacts to fish habitat and marine life, but also about the deeply negative social impacts the project would have on our community. HRM has also consistently objected to this project, including through its Council processes, underscoring that it is incompatible with the municipality's vision for Dartmouth Cove. Most recently, HRM has advanced new bylaw amendments specifically designed to prohibit unnecessary infill in Dartmouth Cove, reflecting both Council's position and the expressed will of the community.

As the order of government responsible for land-use planning, zoning, and harbourfront development, HRM's position carries significant weight. Their objection, combined with the public record of concerns about navigation, fish habitat, and community impacts, is a clear and authoritative expression of the public interest.

Halifax Harbour is indeed a working harbour, but Dartmouth Cove is a sheltered and unique place where the public can walk, bike, and roll along an unbuilt shoreline, directly connecting with the water and observing abundant rockweed, seals, and other marine life. During hurricanes, our community faces significant storm surges; maintaining sheltered areas like Dartmouth Cove provides important natural protection that helps safeguard people and property.

Listening to HRM's [recent public hearing](#), I was struck by the deep personal connection so many people have to the waters of Dartmouth Cove. While I have always known this Cove to be special to Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, what became clear through residents' testimony is just how essential this place is for mental health, well-being, and healthy active living. The ability to walk, paddle, or simply sit by the water and observe marine life is not an abstract benefit. It is part of how our community maintains resilience, wellness, and a direct connection to nature.

Section 2.5(g) of the *Fisheries Act* confirms that, in addition to mandatory habitat considerations, you may also consider social, economic, and cultural factors in the management of fisheries. The testimony presented at HRM's public hearing makes clear that Dartmouth Cove provides exactly these kinds of social and cultural benefits, and that its loss would impose significant social harm on our community.

Under section 34.1(1)(d) of the *Fisheries Act*, you are required to consider the cumulative effects of this project in combination with other activities. In Dartmouth Cove, those cumulative effects are especially significant. Existing infill projects have already placed pressure on fish habitat and marine life in this sheltered area, and adding further infill would only compound these impacts. This concern is heightened given the substantial investments made by multiple orders of government, including the Government of Canada, to restore Halifax Harbour. Notably, the daylighting of Sawmill Creek in downtown Dartmouth was undertaken to improve water quality and to provide safe fish passage directly into Dartmouth Cove. Allowing additional habitat loss through further infilling would not only undermine these ecological gains, but would also diminish the value of these public investments.

My community cannot understand why a proponent would be permitted to bring truckload upon truckload of pyritic slate to infill this special place. Residents see this not only as a threat to fish habitat and marine life, but also as an unnecessary destruction of a cherished waterfront space that supports mental health, recreation, and healthy active living. Allowing this infill of Dartmouth Cove would run counter to the public investments already made to restore Halifax Harbour, and would erode public trust in the protection of our shared waters.

Taken together, the mandatory requirement to assess cumulative effects on fish and fish habitat, the clear and sustained opposition of the municipality and its new bylaw amendments, and the authority to weigh social and cultural impacts, provide a strong statutory basis to refuse any *Fisheries Act* authorization for Project 2022-206446.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to exercise your authority under the *Fisheries Act* to refuse authorization for the proposed infill at Dartmouth Cove.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hon. Darren Fisher, P.C., M.P.
Dartmouth—Cole Harbour