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## N.S. to pay Irving up to \$40 million in land deal

By DAVID JACKSON and MICHAEL LIGHTSTONE Staff Reporters  
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The Dexter government plans to spend up to \$40 million to buy land in southwest Nova Scotia and in Cumberland County from J.D. Irving Ltd. and Rothesay Paper Holdings Ltd.

The approval is in a Dec. 21 cabinet document called an order-in-council. It doesn't say how much land is involved but lists 31 parcels in Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis and Cumberland counties.

The document says the total purchase price is "not to exceed \$40 million," not including appraisal, surveying and legal costs.

Irving put 69,000 hectares of timberland in southwest Nova Scotia on the market about a year ago after initially offering it to the province. The asking price to the government was believed to have been about \$100 million.

The previous Tory government submitted an offer for 8,500 hectares before the June election. Current Natural Resources Minister John MacDonell said in July that Irving had turned down that offer.

On Tuesday, Mr. MacDonell wouldn't say exactly how much land is involved in the purchase because it's not quite a done deal. He said the province is still talking to other landowners about proposed future purchases.

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Mr. MacDonnell said land protection will benefit generations to come.

"This land will belong to the people," he said.

Buy Back Nova Scotia, a coalition of interested people and organizations, including conservationists, all-terrain vehicle clubs, fishermen and municipalities, was worried about losing access to trails and wilderness areas, and it lobbied the provincial government to buy the Irving lands before private interests could.

The province has a legislated goal of protecting 12 per cent of its land mass by 2015. About 8.7 per cent is now protected, the minister said.

"This is going to take us a fair distance — it's not going to take us all the way," Mr. MacDonnell said.

Yarmouth MLA Richard Hurlburt said he supports land conservation but chastised the New Democrats for not using the cash for economic development instead. The Conservative said he has been a vocal critic of the government's decision to stop subsidizing the ferry between Nova Scotia and Maine.

"They've turned their back on the economy," Mr. Hurlburt told The Chronicle Herald.

Kermit deGooyer, conservation co-ordinator with the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax, a member of the coalition, said the purchase will be important to conserve the land and protect public access to it.

"It's great news," he said. "Full marks to the province."

Virginia Smith of the Southwest Paddlers Association, also a coalition member, said in an email that she's pleased to hear about the progress on the land purchase and is anxious for Irving to accept the government's offer.

The land in Cumberland County is owned by Rothesay Paper Holdings Ltd., an Irving company. The lands in southwest Nova Scotia had been listed with American real estate broker LandVest, whose website includes luxury properties and timberland. Three blocks were listed — Weymouth timberlands, Tusket River Lakes and Carleton River Lakes.

The three blocks combined are almost twice the size of nearby Kejimikujik National Park and include a 600-kilometre trail network, 69 lakes and four river systems.

The Dexter government set aside \$81 million in the budget for land purchases, up \$66 million from what the previous Tory government had included in its spring budget. That money will probably be spent by the end of the fiscal year, Mr. MacDonnell said.

He said he's not sure if any parts of the lands in question are sensitive with respect to First Nations heritage. Mr. MacDonnell said the purchase will be vetted through negotiations with the province's aboriginal community.

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**Stoneman wrote:**

In recent news today, the Nova Scotia government backed a truck up and dumped 49 million dollars to the Irvings. In other news, ATVANS is hiring. Good stuff.

**TAXPAYER2 wrote:**

Maybe this money should be used to make all Nova Scotia Government employees equal instead of on unused land!!!!!!!!!!

**beejay wrote:**

I like the idea !

**9-OH-2 wrote:**

The is great news. Let's keep this momentum going and buy back as much as we can.

**Old Abe wrote:**

Same old same old story. The corporations get the money and the workers get the shaft. So the people in the remote parts of the province have to work for less than the fat cats in HRM and the Irvings laugh all the way to the bank. Those of us that did not expect much from an NDP government have not been disappointed they are no better than the Tories. Get real people this is a disaster for NS

**Feedback wrote:**

The "people" have no money to buy this land except those with ATVs. Let them buy their own land.

**8sml wrote:**

Wonderful news. The land in Nova Scotia is a treasure and our heritage, connecting us to the past and providing for us in the future. Protection over generations is far better than intensive development/exploitation with transient economic benefits.

**wsavary wrote:**

YAY! Excellent news! I wonder (tongue in cheek) when the first logging company lease will be signed. It's a spectacular natural region and will hopefully be preserved for all time for future generations.

**bluesky wrote:**

That sounds like a good investment, providing the land is then not opened up to motorized ATVs and snowmobiles. If the likes of ATVANS are then permitted to blaze trails through this wilderness, we would be better off selling the land to the US real estate developers mentioned in the article. These motorized machines are a hazard to their riders and the hapless pedestrians caught in their path. They show a complete disregard for nature and are very destructive. The lobby group ATVANS are no friend to the environment - their executive have been charged with habitat destruction in the past. This land should be left protected for nature and active human recreation (hiking, paddling, etc).

**Common Sense wrote:**

How can a government justify this \$40+ million outlay (from the \$81 million set aside) for reclaiming land which will eventually fall under the U.N. Biosphere umbrella? Look to the Tobeatic folks - no leaves to be overturned, no berries to be picked, while the Kermits' leap for joy on the total ban of all forestry and mining projects in these areas. Pity!

**springhill wrote:**

While I am glad to see Nova Scotia getting it:s land back,I have had a lease on this property for 30 years/ now I am being told by Irving that the new owners, we the people/no longer want to deal with leases,so I have 30 days to remove my camp or they will/ a very poor way to treat someone who has looked after their interests for this long// very disappointed in the way the little guy is treated

**DUKE wrote:**

What a waste of money this is ,this money could be spent on the ER that are suppose to be open 24/7,seniors,education.After spending all this money they will raise our taxes.This government has nothing on the other parties as far as i can see.WASTEFULL

**countryhick wrote:**

This ought to be interesting. Is this piece of land going to be open to ATV traffic, as the buybacknovascotia group intends, or will it be treated as real wilderness? If all terrain vehicles are going to continue operating in there, it's just going to turn into another wasteland which means we will have thrown \$40 million dollars at the ATV community to play with. This is turning into a really expensive pastime, especially when you consider that only 5% of the population even drive these things.

**Gord Arthur wrote:**

Of course you can bet the "greenies" will expect 100% of this land be turned into parks. However, in reality, the politicians originally stated that this will not be so. Some would become park but not all. Lets see if they once again, succumb to the bleate of the environmentalist element amongst us.

**Terran wrote:**

This is a great initiative and I hope the deal goes through. I am curious though to find out what Irving paid for the same parcel of land originally? Maybe the government should be more careful about selling off our provinces resources and we wouldn't have to pay so much to get it back. Irving probably paid a dollar an acre for the same land when they bought it.

**woodtick wrote:**

What a good news story this is. Future generations will appreciate the fore thought in this decision. To be able to obtain a piece of the earth this large for the people is priceless. Good move.

**Medic wrote:**

While I agree we need to protect NS Timberland. I think the NDP Government needs to look at the whole thing with spending 81 million to buy land giving the Irvings money to reburish the Shelburne shipyards on the one hand while at the same time SLAPPING people of rural NS in the face saying we don;t have the money to give you parity with HRM. Also we hear there is to be a new ferry from guess where HALIFAX to New England while Yarmouth has lost the CAT and their plane. Maybe Yarmouth don't need the Cat I mean does this Government realize that the loss of the ferry in Yarmouth will hurt all of NS including HRM where it seems everything goes. The tourist that used the Ferry stopped along both shores. So by lossing the link and having a ferry into Halifax how many tourist do you think would come down to the southwest area of NS???

**southwest wrote:**

What kind of poop is this? were losing the cat ferry, which will kill the tourism in the lower end of the provance, which is our only revenue now, then we find out that by no related matter, there will be a new ferry going to the states from halifax, when you drive down a road you can loose your car in a crator, hospitals are closed multiple days of the week, all because of a shortgae of funds, then oh look were going to buy some land.....maybe we should look after the land we have before buying more! nova scotia is becoming a have-not provance literally over night, and the government has the nerve to piss money away by buying a bunch of swamps. now a days we pay out rageous prices for gas, groceries, cigerettes, with all of these taxes, and the money is going to buy land, its basically a slap in the face! espically to us who live in remote areas, who are afriad of losing our jobs, and keeping ourselves alive, then you read the newspapr to find that instead of saving our ferries, and fixing problems with infastructre, the gov't would rather buy useles alnd that will never be developed into anything useful.....

**jblake wrote:**

The story forgot something.It forgot to mention that the NS Government is kicking people off the land that has had camps on there for over 40 years.They are being given the option to move,or it will be dealt with.No questions asked.Just what is the Gov going to do with the land that they need everybody out????Seems like there are going to be a lot of CAMP fires this year.

**canadian001 wrote:**

Quick math here. As told to me by both Realtors and Appraisors, good wooded land fetches approx. 1000-1500 per acre. I am assuming the Irving land has been clear cut?? So even with the generous 1500 per, we are getting 27,000 acres back? Kewl

**Reliance wrote:**

It seems mighty strange that the NDP Government has no money for the CAT or STARLINK Airlines, but when the Irvings want 9 million for the shipyard in NDP held Shelburne it is found. They can also find 40 million to buy land from the Irvings which means 40 million less on the tax assessment rolls. But they can't find the money for Health Care Workers or School Support workers outside of Halifax. Where the heck are their priorities. Trees, Health Care or Schooling.

**pensive wrote:**

Treehuggers unite!

**Ashford wrote:**

After all the money Irving has made and will make off of Nova Scotians, i think they should just donate the land.....oh wait!, that means rich would not get richer off the deal. Nevermind.

**randu66 wrote:**

What a foolish Government. This is a total waste of taxpayers money. Irving is going to turn around and by up three times as much land as it sold, keep some money in their pockets and clearcut the rest of the province. The only thing the government has to do in Nova Scotia is change the practice of clear cutting and make big industry adhere to it. Fools, Fools, Fools. 49 million in one day to one company.( this clearly means the Irving's have bought the only ticket on Daddy Darrell's new 1/49 Lotto.)

**Whaa?! wrote:**

I do not own an ATV or snowmobile, but I do get a kick out of all these individuals who slam the ATVers and snowmobilers for "destroying" the wilderness. These very same people cry that woodlands should only be used for hiking, that recreational vehicles shouldn't be allowed to use established trails... um, who in the he!! do you think maintains most of these trails?! If the ATV and snowmobile associations and clubs were banned from these trails, they certainly wouldn't use their club fees to keep them cleared of shrubs and alders, and it wouldn't be three years before the trails were so overgrown nobody could hike them. So, unless those who wish to hike these trails free from the annoyance of ATVers and snowmobilers also plan to pay to maintain them, I'd suggest you learn to share the trails. And, to all those who believe the ATVers and Snowmobilers are wreaking havoc with wildlife, have a look at all the deer tracks up and down these trails. During a hard winter the trails give deer an added means of survival by providing them a pathway to easily travel and a ready source of accessible young foliage along the sides of the trails.

**munky wrote:**

if the irvings were threatening to sell the land for foreign interests, the Dexter Government should have had the testicular fortitude to expropriate the land and give the Irvings the valve of which they bought it for..... \$1

**plowman wrote:**

NOVA SCOTIA is IRVING owned almost,they need the money and we are there bank.

**Wake Up Canada wrote:**

Good news but i also agree that the NDP should have only paid back a \$1 not 40million.I'm having a good laugh because I can't believe that George Peters hasn't commented yet....lol

**bluesky wrote:**

To "Mr.Whaa?!" Nature has this way of looking after itself. The deer population can maintain its natural balance without ATVANS cutting trails. If existing AVT trails were to eventually grow over, that would actually be a good thing for the ecosystem. This province is a very small patch of land that is rapidly being overbuilt. The best thing we can do is to leave as much of it alone, as possible. Motorized "recreation" has no place in our forests. Congratulations to the government of NS. Now, can someone figure out a way to restrict ATVs to their owner's property?

**mtt04 wrote:**

NDP commies will have to skin pin to pin to pay for their govt worker, union friendly contracts which will bankrupt us. Get ready for 100% tax increases. I lived through these villains in BC twice and both times this party was more corrupt than the bums we threw out. You will be broke by the time they are done.

**countryhick wrote:**

It's always so gratifying to see the subject of the economic benefits of ATV activity come up. Did you include (1) according to HRM's own figures, it costs 4 times as much to maintain a trail if ATVs use it compared to Active Transportation (AT), ie walkers and bicycles only, and (2) according to PVSC, homes with adjacent ATV trails lose about 15% of their property values, and (3) homes adjacent to non-motorized – ie hiking and bicycling only – will see their property values go UP by an average of 13%.? Translation: if you have an ATV trail behind your house, turn into an AT trail and watch your property value go up about 28%. Could someone please elaborate a little more on the benefits of having ATV trails around?

**GrahamT wrote:**

Wow, twice the size of Keji with 69 lakes and 4 river systems. The ATVANS executive ended up getting charged by the province with habitat destruction on a simple days-outing with that reporter when they mucked-up a stream, just imagine what kind of environmental damage they could do with 69 lakes and 4 river systems!

**dsydney wrote:**

So the NDP are giving away millions to the irvings but taking away money from the unions- too funny- solidarity brother

**nsduckhunter wrote:**

Hey there Country Hick, not sure what thought process led you to connect ATV's with the words NDP, Irving , Land , Millions of dollars , but please don't speak about things you know so little about! We get it, you would rather walk than ride an ATV... That is your choice. Man people tick me off sometimes!

**dsydney wrote:**

Irving \$49 Million- janitors and bus drivers outside halifax \$0- Watching the NDP members revolt against their own- priceless

**David fm CH wrote:**

Yes munky, if Robert Mugabe was premier that probably would have happened.

**holysmokes wrote:**

now hire some tree planters and get things cleaned up

**Outdoorsman wrote:**

This is wonderful news! Good on Premier Dexter and his cabinet! Let's continue buying back Nova Scotia! I am dying to see the list of properties purchased....

**Old Abe wrote:**

David I think Robert Mugowbee is premier.You would have to be a lunatic from the third world to give the Irvings this kind of a sweetheart deal.Given the fiscal needs of the province Dexter should have raised the taxes on the land so that the Irvings would be glad to give you the d-----d land.

**Whaa?! wrote:**

Bluesky, if you'd even remotely done your homework or even just flown over the province in an airplane you would've known that A) many of the ATV trails are former rail beds -- they were originally built by the railroads and now that they are no longer used by the trains are being maintained by the ATV associations, and B) Nova Scotia is hardly devoid of woodland -- as is very apparent by air, 90 per cent of the province is woodland. It's ridiculous and completely erroneous to claim that couple of hundred miles of recreational trails are a threat to the province's wilderness. There are thousands of miles of pristine wilderness that have not been and will never be touched by recreational vehicles. People like you want it all. You are so intensely closed minded, narrow-viewed and self-absorbed that you refuse to even consider any view opposed to your own. You make assumptions and prejudice situations based solely on your feelings rather than provable or even supporting evidence. How can I know this about you? Very simple -- you have made the incorrect assumption that I am a man, based solely on your own narrow view of what sex would've written my previous post.

**MattPoulson wrote:**

Good news if you ask me. Land will always retain its value, and we probably got it cheap because prices are depressed now. A once in a lifetime opportunity - I'm glad the government didn't pass it up!

**bluesky wrote:**

I'll concede one thing to M. Whaa?! - your gender. I've flown over much of NS, the sight from the air is quite disturbing, over-cutting and sprawling housing is seen from Yarmouth to Sydney. We really are a small territory, its time we all started taking better care of it - you and me. Areas that were remote to humans when I was a boy are now only too accessible by too many people. ATVs and snowmobiles provide too-easy access to people who are careless and thoughtless. Where is this pristine wilderness you talk of? Maybe in the 1950s, but not in the year 2010. Some ATV trails are former trailbeds (beware walkers and cyclists), but too many cut through wilderness areas. I would like to leave some of nature to my grandchildren to experience - yes I want it all.

**countryhick wrote:**

"It's ridiculous and completely erroneous to claim that couple of hundred miles of recreational trails are a threat to the province's wilderness." Yeah, that would be ridiculous. Problem is, according to the ATV industry itself, there is at least 5,500 km of ATV trails in Nova Scotia.

**hunting wrote:**

countryhick, those same ATV trails which you obviously hate are paid for by the OHV fees charged to each registration of every ATV and Snowmobile. This while the Hikers, Walkers, Whiners and other users pay nothing. Good deal for you I think.

**macwallers wrote:**

Umm, wasn't this crown land to begin with? While I am delighted that this land is going to be owned again by Nova Scotians (hopefully with covenants to protect it from development and clear-cutting), I am seriously cheesed-off that we are paying so much of our money for land we gave away. What did we get in return? Somehow, I suspect that Irving got the better end of the deal. We just don't seem to learn. Seven generations, people!

**Whaa?! wrote:**

Yeah, okay Bluesky... you're protecting your grandchildren's right to enjoy the wilderness but only on your terms. What about their right to choose how they'd like to enjoy it. Perhaps you could stop labeling all recreational vehicle users as irresponsible and destructive. I'm sure there are a few who simply want to take a drive along a trail they've paid to maintain without worrying about the narrow-minded and judgmental stereotyping them. Why not include other motor vehicles in your crusade -- after all the tar in pavement is toxic, highways tear through and damage wilderness, therefore everyone who drives a car must be a destructive and irresponsible maniac bent on depriving our grandchildren from their God-given right to enjoy the wilderness in its purest form. But, perhaps it's just easier to point a finger of blame at the recreational vehicle users instead of recognizing that all motor vehicles negatively impact our environment and working towards a fair compromise.

**dougsuth wrote:**

Not a big deal. This was Indian land in the first place. So what if Irvings (NB Company) are smart enough to buy this land from Bowaters for a song and then sell it back to the NS Government for a hefty tax free gain.

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