



THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 158, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0

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NO. I

The second significant snow fall ended early this morning January 30, 2016. There have been significant power outages across Nova Scotia. About 25cms of heavy wind packed snow accumulated during the storm. It was just the right density snow to construct an igloo with, if a person was so inclined and had the skills to do so. This is the third winter in a row that significant snow storms gave focused on Cape Breton in January. This storm was exactly centered over Cape Breton from a viewing of Environment Canada's satellite imaging. This year's two storms have been short and sweet depositing much snow over a period of 8-10 hours in the dark of night.

It is against this weather back drop that the current issue of the Blue Heron has taken shape. Much of the pieces in this issue have been sourced through the local newspapers. I am somewhat of a news junkie, viewing three papers daily. Any time I see anything that has to do with the Bras d'Or and its watershed, I either cut the article out or if it sourced from a website, save it for future reference and possible use. This way, material

for a newsletter is available to use or refer to.

The July 2015 issue of the Blue Heron focused on the use of woody biomass to generate power by burning wood in a boiler as is currently the case at Port Hawkesbury Paper. A recent article from the Chronicle Herald, is reprinted in this newsletter, articulates well the hot debate of burning Nova Scotia's forests in a giant boiler to generate electricity. This use of Nova Scotia's forests is hard to justify other than blind foolishness on behalf of the Province. Much wood is being harvested from the Bras d'Or watershed that daily is trucked to the boiler at Port Hawkesbury Paper to disappear into the heavens as smoke and water vapor at an alarming rate. It has been stated that the Province does not have adequate wood supply to sustain this program. Once burnt, it takes many years for the forests to regenerate.

The issue's 'News Items' focus on activities and development. There is an update of progress regarding the Hume's River Wilderness Trail which hopefully will become a reality. It takes a lot of work to plan and develop such a hiking trail, but when completed it should be a great addition to tramping trails in Cape Breton. A recent piece in the newspaper has focused on Dundee Resort in Dundee as it is for sale for 2.5 million dollars. This resort, with an 18 hole golf course, was constructed in the mid 1970s along with a marina for about 9 million dollars. The marina was closed and the property sold in 2014 just as a new marina was being opened in Ben Eoin.

Accompanying this hopeful sale of Dundee Resort is the announcement of a 50 million dollar high priced housing development to be known as

the "Dundee Village". This complex is to be built on land adjacent to Dundee Resort. It may be said that the developers must see 'gold' in the Dundee Hills with Dundee Resort as an added nugget of enticement for attracting tourists to the West Bay area. The question yet to be answered is the issue of sewer and water accommodation required to service the 250 building lots and the homes to be built. Plans include a zip line and a yurt complex plus a mall. The question is "Is this the type is development that is sustainable?"

Currently, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the global village that hits us daily in the news. As someone stated to me recently, "the only constant we have is change in the face of uncertainty."



NOTICE
THE ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING
OF THE SOCIETY
WILL BE HELD
APRIL 23, 2016
AT THE MASONIC HALL
IN BADDECK AT 10AM

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“Our goal is to
protect,
conserve and
restore the
Bras d'Or Lakes”



NEWS ITEMS:

Dundee Resort for Sale

In the market for an 18-hole golf course, 60-room lodge, smaller vacation cabins, restaurant and more? The Dundee Resort and Golf Club can be yours for \$2.5 million.

Scott MacAulay, CEO of Cape Breton Resorts, said the property on West Bay Road along the Bras d'Or Lake has been for sale for about a week and there are already some buyers kicking the tires. "There's a lot of interest, both locally and internationally," he said.

The golf course was built nearly 40 years ago in Richmond County by the federal government's local economic development agency, the Cape Breton Development Corp., known as Devco. MacAulay said Cape Breton Resorts purchased the property about 23 years ago and added the lodge, a new clubhouse and other amenities. The timing just seemed right to put the resort on the market, he said.

"It's a good time with the American dollar the way it is. Tourism is certainly on the upswing (and) there's a development happening next door. Areas like this will become even more popular, where travel is more expensive, and places like this in your backyard is pretty neat."

Mother Nature Developments Ltd., whose majority shareholder is Bedford acupuncturist Hossam Elokda, is proposing to build Dundee Hills Vacation Village with up to 200 housing lots on 140 hectares next to Dundee Resort. According to the developers, the village would include a mix of residential units, a spa and wellness centre and an adventure park.

Construction on the first phase is

expected to start this year on up to 50 lots, and the municipality is considering the developer's request to cover maintenance costs on a proposed new waste-water system that would support the project.

Cape Breton Resorts also owns the Inverary Inn and Ceilidh Lodge in Baddeck, the 18-hole Bell Bay Golf Club in Baddeck, and two vacation home developments — Kildare Landing in Baddeck and Ingonish By The Sea in Ingonish.

MacAulay said the recent opening of two new golf courses in Inverness did not play a factor in his decision to put Dundee up for sale. "This is a different product," he said. "It's family-orientated. It's got lots of activities. It's located in a rural area, so you're really getting away when you're going to Dundee." The resort is closed in winter, but summer activities include canoeing and kayaking, an adventure centre for children, indoor and outdoor pools, and beach bonfires. However, MacAulay said, there are plans to develop winter activities, including snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

The resort is still taking bookings for the summer and the sale is not expected to have an effect on the staff, he said. "We're very fortunate. We've got a great management team there now and a great staff, so it's certainly well set up." (Reprinted from Chronicle Herald Article January 2016)

Dundee Hills Vacation Village- A 50 Million Dollar Development

Dundee Hills Vacation Village is an active living vacation and retirement community overlooking the Bras d'Or Lakes in West Bay, Nova Scotia. Adjoining the Dundee Golf Resort, Dundee Hills is the

embodiment of a commitment to creating communities that respect nature and promote a healthy and active lifestyle. The Dundee Hills development encompasses 325 acres of pristine forested land, with private access from West Bay Road and extending beyond the plateau of Dundee Hill. When completed, Dundee Hills will include approximately 200 serviced housing lots on 150 acres surrounding the golf course and offering spectacular views of Bras d'Or Lake. The community will also include up to four small condominium buildings next to a community market, with view of the golf course and lake.

A spectacular hilltop condominium will offer breathtaking views. The remaining 175 acres, including nine acres of riverfront on the beautiful tidal Sissiboo River, will be developed for a wide variety of recreational and cultural activities. In addition to the world-class golf next door, the development will include extensive trails for walking and biking, a riverside water park, a camping and adventure park, a wellness spa, a marina, a market and facilities for hosting cultural activities. The community has access to the magnificent Bras d'Or Lake, which will enable the establishment of water-based recreational activities, and provide docking facilities for community members." (See www.dundeehills.ca)

(Excerpted from the Dundee Vacation Hills Village website)

Sailing Cape Breton Island

In mid-summer 2015, a spanking brand new 42' catamaran arrived in the Bras d'Or Lakes. Built in the eastern Long Island, NY this boat, an Alpha 42, has the latest

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NEWS ITEMS:

News Items, cont'd ...

in comfort and amenities. It will be engaged as a charter vessel available to clients who choose to sail on the Bras d'Or. There are various package selections available with regards to charter time periods and cruise plans. More information is available on Sailing Cape Breton Island's web site (www.sailingcbi.ca).

Humes River Wilderness Hiking Trail

Work continues on the planning and financing of the 9km hiking trail that will provide a scenic hike to the Hume's River waterfalls. In early summer 2015, the Biosphere Northeast Trails Association (BNTA) began a process to construct a hiking trail between the communities of Wagmatcook, Victoria County and Aberdeen, Inverness County. This is the first trail project for BNTA which was organized in 2014 with the objective of constructing and promoting trails within northern Cape Breton. This trail will utilize an existing road of 4km. It will then cross two private parcels into the Humes River Wilderness Protected Area, eventually ending at the Little Narrows turn off on the Trans Canada Highway. Located in the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve, this trail crosses lands farmed by early settlers and into a ravine of intact Acadian forest.

In the summer of 2015, BNTA obtained permission from the Nova Scotia Department of Environment to proceed with planning for the construction of the trail. A proposed background and information package was prepared and public meetings were held

in Whycocomagh, Wagmatcook and Baddeck. Cobequid Trail Consultants have prepared a 'Concept and Construction Plan' for the eastern portion of the trail. The eastern portion of the trail is 11kms. in length and includes three waterfalls-MacNaughton Brook Falls, Humes River Falls and First Brook Falls. The Humes River Falls is a 60ft. falls located in a spectacular canyon within the Humes Wilderness Protected Area. (Update provided by Athol Grant)

Bras' d'Or Lakes Biosphere 2015 Fall Update

A comprehensive review of the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve's activities is available on the association's website. Progress being made on many fronts with regards to a newly published Atlas, a potential trail, the housing of the interpretive diorama in the Bell Museum, the Bras d'Or Lakes Watch Initiative and other activities. The Association has received its charitable status and donations and new members are encouraged to support the aims of the Association. Most of the work is carried out by volunteers, who are dedicated, to the goals espoused by the UNESCO Biosphere charter designation that now enshrines the Bras d'Or and its watershed as a component of the global biosphere net work. (www.blbra.com)

Woody Biomass Update

Peter and Candace Christiano provided an update regarding the efficiency and productivity of creating electrical power from steam generated from the burning of woody biomass at Port Hawkesbury Paper. This use of trees as a source for creating electrical power is mind dummying

to try and understand given the amount of wood required to be roasted and toasted. Future adequate supply of woody biomass is questionable. There is a lot of 'mystification' here as to the use of local forests to supply the boiler as there is no added value to the utilization of forest resources to generate electricity. The last issue of the Blue Heron provided excellent articles on the negative issues associated with producing electricity from burning woody biomass. It is indeed a sad story and a further evidence that the Province of Nova Scotia has no binding accountability for providing sustainable forestry management. To this end, a recent article by in the Chronicle Herald, "[Future Of Northern N.S. Forests: From Wilderness to Lumber](#)" has been included in this newsletter!

Proposed Conference

At a meeting of the Collaborative Economic Planning Initiative held in Eskasoni on January 28, 2016, serious consideration was given to convening a conference in the fall of 2016, focused on the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed with regards to sustainability. Dan Christmas is the new chair of CEPI and Stan Johnson is the President. Both are prominent leaders in the First Nations Community. There was a positive response amongst the CEPI participants. Plans are to be formulated with regards to gaining the needed financial support as well as organizational requirements. Right now suggestions are being solicited regarding the topical content for such a conference as well as to its location. All agreed this is a timely potential event that deserves serious consideration.

THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN N.S. FORESTS

GIANTS LAKE — In 10 to 20 years, Daniel George expects to see six-wheel-drive porters dropping off spruce at the bottom of this Guysborough County woods road. He expects they will head to Port Hawkesbury Paper, where they will be sorted so that most will become glossy magazine paper, some will be turned into electricity at Nova Scotia Power's biomass boiler and maybe a few of the best sticks will get sent to a sawmill to become the lumber with which we build our homes.

"That was once old Bobby MacIsaac's land," said George, a private woodlands contractor from up the road in Roachvale, Guysborough County.

"He died a few years back, around 1999 or 2000, but he carved a living off that land. There wouldn't be an acre there that hasn't been cut at some point."

It's not a pristine old-growth woodlot with great ecological value as habitat. The roughly 250 hectares the province bought last year for \$247,640 from a woodlot-owning consortium called Five Islands Forest Development Ltd., who at some point purchased it from MacIsaac's heirs, has long been a working property.

To understand this story, you'll have to think like a lumberjack. Lumberjacks aren't quaint bearded men clad in plaid swinging a double-bitted axe anymore. They probably never were. They're actually more like farmers, except their crops are on 40-year rotations, about the length of time it takes a black spruce in a well-managed forest to grow big enough to be turned into saw logs and pulpwood.

And a good deal of the land harvested today in Nova Scotia for forest products hasn't been forest for a long time. Much of this province was cleared or burned for farmland by early settlers and has been returning to woodland over the last century.

But what happens when most of the farm and forest land is beholden to large companies. "It's bringing us closer and closer to the feudal system our ancestors left Ireland and Scotland to get away from," said George.

"Look at Antigonish, Cumberland and Lunenburg counties; they all have about 90 per cent of private ownership and have strong rural economies. Guysborough and Inverness and Victoria counties have the highest percentage of Crown land and industrial freehold land, and our economies are some of the weakest."

About half Guysborough County's woodlands are owned by the province, while nearly another quarter are owned by large industry. That leaves about 109,000 hectares of private woodlot ownership in the county.

According to George, recent purchases by the Natural Resources Department put more of northern Nova Scotia woodlands into the service of pulp mills and take them out of the equation of creating higher-value products that put more money into cash-strapped rural economies.

The heavily redacted 2012 Forest Utilization License Agreement between the provincial government and the new owners of Port Hawkesbury Paper created a legal obligation for the department to make 400,000 tonnes of undried wood available annually to the mill.

To return to the farmer analogy, a field or a woodlot can produce a variety of crops, some more

valuable than others.

"The problem is we're just murdering the land for hog fuel," said Russell Huntington, owner of M.B. Pulp Ltd., on Friday.

"They're flattening choice logs for hog fuel." Huntington employs five people, including himself, running two harvesters and two porters on private woodlots around Cape Breton. He can't get access to Crown land because it's being managed by Port Hawkesbury Paper.

Meanwhile, two of the province's largest industrial landowners, Great Northern Timber of Sheet Harbour and Wagner Forest Products, have the contract to supply the new biomass boiler at Point Tupper. When generating electricity at peak production, the boiler is supposed to consume 600,000 tonnes of wood per year. The boiler was originally supposed to rely on waste wood from Port Hawkesbury Paper, but the reality, according to private land contractors like Huntington, has been cutting hardwood to burn for electricity.

Meanwhile, the province's high-value hardwood industry has been shutting down, citing lack of access to woodlands in the process. Pomquet, Antigonish County, flooring manufacturer Rivers Bend Wood Products closed last February. Finewood Flooring and Lumber Ltd. of Middle River, Victoria County, closed two years ago, and the Groupe Savoie hardwood mill in Westville has been running a skeleton crew because it can't get logs.

Allan Eddy, associate deputy minister of the Natural Resources Department, makes no bones about the fact the province has been expanding its land holdings in recent decades. While buying up land, Eddy said, his department has

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been balancing the needs of small and large industrial operators while setting aside protected areas for habitat and recreational use. "Next to Prince Edward Island, we have the lowest portion of Crown lands in the federation," said Eddy. Over recent years, his department has made land available to maple syrup producers and blueberry farmers.

Asked about the purchase in Giants Lake, he said there are "four or five mills within economic trucking distance." One of the accusations made by private lands contractors is that the province makes it cheaper for Port Hawkesbury Paper to cut on Crown land than on private, thereby creating a false economy. Eddy denied this, saying stumpage rates charged to Port Hawkesbury Paper are based on market rates. He didn't say what the province pays back to the mill for managing the lands, citing privacy concerns.

Ultimately, neither George nor Huntington want to see the mill go. It pumps over \$100 million annually into the economy of northern Nova Scotia, and due to the mixed nature of the province's forests, sawmills wouldn't be able to afford to cut stud wood without a destination for lower-quality pulp. "I know for a fact that if the (pulp mills) go down, then every damn thing goes down within one month," said Kingsley Brown, president of the Nova Scotia Landowners and Forest Fibre Producers Association, on Friday.

And he's an advocate for evolution to forests managed to produce high-quality hardwood processed here into value-added products. But, he said, there will always need to be a destination for low-quality products like pulp. So his group is working with Port Hawkesbury Paper to allow choice hardwood saw logs sent along with pulpwood deliveries

to be set aside in the mill's yard.

But whether there is enough land in northern Nova Scotia to supply two pulp mills, the new biomass boiler and allow for high-value forest management remains to be seen. The Natural Resources Department says there is. George and Huntington say there isn't — at least not the way things are being managed now. (Reprinted from the Halifax Chronicle Herald January 23, 2016)

FALL CRUISING ON THE BRAS D'OR

In September 2015, I spent three days cruising with a long term friend of mine, who always wanted to sail on the Bras d'Or Lakes. He had driven from Mt. Desert Island (MDI) in Maine which has its own fine scenic geography and sailing waters. If you have ever visited MDI, you would agree that with its Acadia National Park that MDI is indeed a special place that flourishes in the summer. We did not have the best of weather as I had hoped. I was, however, determined that I would show him the splendors of the Bras d'Or. We left Baddeck on an overcast morning with some drizzle and a fall chill the air. There was not as much wind as one might expect, but we managed to sail. There was no another boats insight. We had the Bras d'Or to ourselves, a true late boating season luxury!

We anchored for the night in Bouleceet (Maskell's) Harbor, perhaps the most popular Bras d'Or harbor of all. The next day we headed through Grand Narrows making our way towards the "Boom", but then decided to head to Little Harbor and Marble Mountain to see the sights. The wind was

light, but we were in no hurry. We anchored in Little Harbor for lunch and then proceeded to sail through the islands off the Marble Mountain shore before heading for Malagawatch for a quiet anchorage and good dinner. The anchorage was perfect as an eagle appeared and as a fine dinner was being prepared.

What struck me was how little the shoreline had changed over the 40 years that I have cruised the Bras d'Or. Yes, there are observable select new houses, a few nonconforming rip wrapped shore fronts and some visible clear cuts. By and large the Bras d'Or and its watershed remains substantially resilient to the type of development that would or could dramatically alter the face of the Bras d'Or irreparably.

Recent announcements by the current Nova Scotia government have focused on the fact that the goal of protecting 12.3 % of Nova Scotia's ecologically significant land base has been achieved. There is debate about how much more of Nova Scotia's land should be protected. There is no easy answer here, but land conservation is the only way of preserving nature's beauty for future generations. If it were not for the deep vision of US President Theodore Roosevelt in the early 1900s, it may have taken many more years for USA's national park systems to be put in place.

Recently, a battle has emerged regarding the construction of a commemorative statue on the granite shores of Green Cove in the Cape Breton Highland's National Park. It has been an interesting and provocative debate flowing across Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. An excellent piece appeared in the January 23, 2016 Globe and Mail by Ray MacGregor arguing that Canada's National

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Parks should not be exploited for commercial development. The theme is to protect nature's beauty. Canada's national parks belong to all Canadians and should be considered sacred places. The Bras d'Or Lake should be considered similarly. To our indigenous first nations community the Bras d'Or is sacred!

The formulation of a "vision" is often based on the hope of better things to come. There are personal visions akin to agendas and there are visions of collective groups working for a common cause where consensus is required to hopefully achieve the shared goals.

Over the last twenty four years much focus by various organization has been aimed at the Bras d'Or Lakes. The First Nations had taken a leading role in drawing attention to the importance of understanding the historic role the Bras d'Or has played in their daily lives and cosmology. The Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere organization has worked diligently to obtain its international UNESCO "Biosphere Designation" which places the Bras d'Or and its watershed amongst all accredited biospheres worldwide. This is a fine accolade which should help cement the "vision" of importance of protecting the Bras d'Or and its watershed. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society was formed to tackle some of the pressing environmental issues. The Bras d'Or Preservation Trust was established to protect private property within the watershed. The Bras d'Or Institute has dealt with scientific issues with regards to aquatic life with focus on fish populations and habitat. The Eskasoni Fish and Wild Life Commission has studied many issues that focus on the natural attributes of the Bras d'Or. There has been a reasonable interchange

of communication and cooperation amongst these groups.

Yet, there has not been the ability to put together a 'comprehensive planning document' for the future of the Bras d'Or and its watershed. To develop a plan is not easy, but not to have a plan is untenable if we want to make sure that the Bras d'Or and its watershed are to be enjoyed by future generations.

Henry W. Fuller

SPECIAL

The Bras d'Or Stewardship's avian emblem, the great blue heron, is Cape Breton Island's largest wading bird. A remarkably patient hunter and strong and graceful flyer, the great blue heron is quickly recognized by even the most reluctant birder. In flight, the first impression of a very large (up to 4' in length with an impressive 6' wing-span), long-legged, blue-grey bird with long and thick neck drawn into a tight "s", prompts immediate recognition. Upon closer examination, the bird's white head, accented with unmistakable thick black stripes above each eye that extend over forehead, crown and rear of head, its rakish and ornate breeding plumes set at a jaunty angle, its bi-coloured bill (dark above with a yellow lower mandible) and strong, dark legs, confirm its identification. Shaggy breast feathers (outlined in black) disappear following breeding. There is little difference between the plumage of male and female birds and even the juvenile great blue heron early resembles its parents, lacking the chest feathering but graced, instead, with heavily streaked breast and belly. The great blue heron's long, rounded and sharply pointed bill is

well suited to probing the shallows for small crustaceans and equally suited to catching the small fish that are the mainstay of its diet which is supplemented with frogs, aquatic insects and even small mammals. The great blue heron is not noted as a songbird. In fact its harsh and guttural "gronk", although distinctive, lacks any musical associations whatsoever. Both sexes engage in bill clacking and will sometimes call with short, harsh notes if alarmed.

Colonial birds that generally nest in isolated areas in short-lived sites (colonies remain viable for about 10 - 15 years maximum), the Bras d'Or Lake and watershed historically supported nesting colonies in Victoria County at Big Farm (within the Bras d'Or watershed), at the head of Baddeck Bay, on Kidston Island and at Malagawatch. And, as recently as the 1980's, a sizeable great blue heron colony was active at Baddeck Inlet. Today there is little current data available regarding the great blue heron's nesting colonies on or near the Bras d'Or Lake. Therefore, nesting site observations of great blue heron by citizen scientists are welcomed by the Department of Natural Resources and birders are encouraged to contact their local DNR depot with any current information regarding great blue heron colonies.

By Bethsheilia Kent





The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 158

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January 30, 2016

Dear Society Supporters,

At a recent meeting of the Collaborative Economic Planning Initiative (CEPI) group the lament was voiced that the resident population within the Bras d'Or watershed was decreasing and was becoming nothing but old people. I am not sure what the definition of old is, but a quick look in the mirror is a sure fire way of ringing the truth out of one's visage. No one likes to consider oneself old, but the quicker one acknowledges the fact the truth is undeniable. I will turn 70 in September 2016! Am I old? I hope not!

A quick look around a Bras d'Or Stewardship Society board meeting shows the wrinkles of time as the average age of a the current board member is over 70! As mentioned before we are fortunate to have a stalwart group of board members who brave significant travel to participate in our meetings. We all look forward to our monthly gathering. The Society itself is aging and 2017 when it arrives will mark twenty years since the Society's inception in 1997. It only seems a day or so since the Society held a 10th anniversary celebration in Iona!

I have mentioned before the difficulty to find new board members who have a genuine interest in the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. We did have two younger members, but they had busy lives to lead. A significant loss here. Last year I mentioned the fact that the notion of civic responsibility is a scarce commodity, but the fact is young adults area scarce commodity. A recent lament from a member of another local entity's board is that there are no young people. Hence, boards are forced to "recycle" board members which is not healthy as people are coerced to accept a board membership because there is no one else. New energy cannot be infused by recycling existing board members. This becomes often an act of desperation to prolong survival!

Regardless, we must rejoice in the fact that the Society is still healthy and financially sustainable. We have a loyal group of long term supporters. However, age also becomes a factor here as our supporters are also having to look in the mirror. However, we hope that you will continue to support the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society for another year. Anymore might be asking a lot given these uncertain times! Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Henry W. Fuller, Interim Recycled Chairman

"Our Goal is to Protect, Conserve and Restore the Bras d'Or Lakes"



The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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Bras d'Or Watch

to report any observed acts, incidents and violations
that threaten the integrity of Bras d'Or Lakes please call
any of the directors listed above.

Our Email: www.brasdorstewardshipsociety.org

2016

BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

MEMBER \$15.00
FAMILY \$25.00
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LIFETIME MEMBER \$500.00

Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the
Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through
responsible stewardship.

Name

Address

*Mail check or money order along with your name
and address to:*

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

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