Houston’s January Surprise

What a remarkable letter Tim Houston just sent his caucus. Remarkable, first, because it bears no resemblance to the platform they ran on two months ago. Healthcare, housing, affordability are so yesterday. Instead we are to pin our province’s health and prosperity on … resource extraction.

Wait. Haven’t we been here before, and before, and before? Northern Pulp, anyone?

Secondly, panicking in the face of threats is no way to lead the province. Legislated commitments to protect nature and green our grid can’t just be abandoned. The PCs have no mandate to roll back environmental safeguards such as the fracking and uranium bans.

The third and perhaps most unsettling aspect of Houston's letter, is its divisiveness. It invents a category, the 2%  – ‘special interests’ -- versus the 98% whose ‘bread and butter concerns’ should be listened to. By ‘special interests’ Houston does not seem to be referring to corporations, who have long had the ear of government in this province, but to people who care about our home.

Very well, I confess, I have a special interest. I have a special interest in maintaining a livable planet. Nowhere in his lengthy letter does Houston refer to climate change or nature loss. Instead he describes possible reserves of gas and coalbed methane as “opportunities.” Opportunities for more deadly floods, wildfires, droughts and storms. Catastrophes that will empty our coffers faster than we can fill them.

Doubling down on the practices that got us into this mess is no solution. To find a way forward we need to say yes to science and Indigenous knowledge. Treating nature as a relation not a resource is the first step in creating an economy that exists within ecological boundaries while also meeting the needs of all Nova Scotians. How best can we care for each other and our home? This is the great challenge. If we tackle it with energy and courage and kindness, with ingenuity and respect for each other, then our province can be a beacon of sanity in a crazy world.

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