

Issue: Maple producer evicted from sugar bush

Dear Mr. Tory Rushton

Please accept this letter from Hutchinson Acres Inc., Chris Hutchinson, Anna Hutchinson and Hutchinson Maple Products Inc. (collectively referred to as “**Hutchinson**”).

Although Hutchinson has commenced legal action against the government and the Province via the Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”), this only came about because of DNR’s failure to address the issues with Hutchinson’s current leases with the province. If DNR will agree to sign a revised lease suited for maple syrup production for the existing land that was given to Hutchinson as a Timber contract, and for additional land that DNR advised would be leased to Hutchinson to expand its operations, then there would be no need for the current litigation.

Summary

The two main issues that have affected Hutchinson are (1) that the lease granted by DNR to Hutchinson was a timber lease, not a proper farming lease and (2) Hutchinson expanded its operations on the understanding from DNR that an additional 2,500 acres would be leased to it, allowing Hutchinson to expand from 30,000 taps to 100,000 taps.

For years, Hutchinson understood from representatives of DNR that the lease would be converted to a proper farming lease and has attempted to work with DNR to resolve this. The restrictions in a timber lease prevent Hutchinson from being able to properly farm/produce maple syrup, and without a proper lease for the current land and additional land Hutchinson is unable to effectively farm and produce maple syrup sufficient to meet demand. This has put a significant financial strain on Hutchinson.

However, if the lease were to be revised to a proper farming lease, and the additional lands leased, Hutchinson would be able to:

- a) Quickly scale production from 25,000 to 100,000 taps, or approximately 175,000 lbs to 700,000 lbs of maple syrup produced annually;
- b) Restore and increase our rural employment by 19.6%;
- c) Continue expanding into global markets promoting a popular, distinctly Nova Scotian product under the Nova Scotia Loyal label.

Enclosed as **Schedule “A”** to this letter is a draft copy of a farming lease which Hutchinson submits would permit Hutchinson to properly farm the land, while still including the necessary protections and oversight required by DNR.

Attached as **Schedule “B”** is a map outlining the 2,500 acres that Hutchinson had understood would be leased to it.

Maple syrup production can succeed in Nova Scotia under the right conditions

The demand is there. DNR can look to New Brunswick as an example of what can happen when the government partners with maple syrup farming. Between 2011 and 2021 New Brunswick increased its production by 50%, and its gross value of maple syrup farming 60%.

Nova Scotia v. New Brunswick¹

Indicator	Earlier year	Later comparable year	Growth
New Brunswick taps	1,896,773 (2011)	3,523,948 (2021)	+85.8%
Nova Scotia taps	372,452 (2011)	420,383 (2021)	+12.9%
NB taps per reporting farm	10,782 (2016)	18,744 (2021)	+73.8%
NB maple production	4.72m kg (2021)	6.97m kg (2025)	+47.6%
NB gross value of maple products	\$31.7m (2021)	\$50.5m (2025)	+59.6%

This boom in production was facilitated and supported by a number of steps taken by the New Brunswick Provincial Government, including²:

- a) Creating a dedicated maple syrup lease for collecting sap, processing it and selling maple products on Crown Land.
- b) Providing capital financing for new surgeries and expansions
- c) Making more than 4,000 hectares of Crown Forest available for maple leases in 2015, and another 5,000 hectares in 2023

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/96-325-x/2021001/article/00004-eng.htm>,
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/sector/horticulture/reports/statistical-overview-canadian-maple-industry-2025>

² <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/igniven/corporate/promogarming-new-entrants/farmingcommodity/farming-specialty-operations.html>

- d) Funding electrical infrastructure, tubing, pump stations, reverse-osmosis systems, monitoring systems and processing buildings, and
- e) Adding production insurance specifically for maple producers in 2024. Below is a comparison table of the growth that occurred between 2011 and 2021 in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

Hutchinson can provide similar benefits in partnership with DNR. Through innovative farming practices Hutchinson can now produce upwards of 7 lbs of sap per tap. Based on this production, Hutchinson's produces \$3,000 per acre at the farm gate, while industrial forest produces approximately \$1,500 per acre for every 40–75-year cycle.

Commercial maple production is viable in Nova Scotia

In 2014, Hutchinson partnered with the Province's Productivity Investment Program (Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive) and redesigned our existing sugarbush and maple production system by contracting two Quebec maple industry consultants, paid for in part by the Department of Agriculture.

We demonstrated that commercial maple production is economically viable with 2,500 acres and 100,000 taps. This commercial opportunity extends beyond the farm itself, Hutchinson Acres has developed repeat customers in Nova Scotia, across Canada, and internationally.

Minister Rushton, the demand, equipment, and expertise already exist in us. With the proposed lease, we can meet that demand, return to growth, and expand the province's presence in domestic and global maple markets.

We contribute to the common good of Nova Scotia

The proposed lease affects a relatively small Crown land area but as demonstrated above, could generate decades of employment, production capabilities, supply chains, export revenue, and tourism activity.

In addition, expanding commercial maple syrup production with our specific expertise supports provincial agricultural goals and positions Nova Scotia within a growing global market for premium, trustworthy maple products. With established international demand, we can help elevate Nova Scotia's profile, attract attention to its forestry innovation, and open new export opportunities.

Again, Hutchinson's only goal is to continue developing the maple syrup industry for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. Honorable Tim Houston's recent comments in the media make clear that this is a shared goal.

Hutchinson believes this proposal provides a ready path forward. It establishes long term tenure suited to maple syrup agriculture while protecting the province's ownership and oversight of the land.

Hutchinson respectfully asks DNR to consider and agree to its proposal to finalize this matter, and to enable the conditions necessary for maple syrup farming to succeed in Nova Scotia

Sincerely,

Chris and Anna Hutchinson

Hutchinson Acres