



Williams Lake
Conservation Company

The Williams Lake Conservation Company President's Remarks

The following is based on WLCC President Murray Coolican's concluding remarks made at the WLCC Annual General Meeting on June 23 2026.

The Williams Lake Conservation Company (WLCC) was founded 58 years ago to promote the health of Williams Lake and its watershed for the benefit of all.

We have made a difference.

History

Historically, the largest threat to Williams Lake has been the gradual deterioration of the dam originally built in the 1770's. WLCC undertook a number of projects to "repair" the dam such as gabion baskets filled with stones, and bags of concrete and stone. While these strengthened the visible parts of the dam, they could not stop leaking underneath the dam.

Over the years we worked with government officials and politicians at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels to find a solution to the leaking dam. This Summer the Province of Nova Scotia, led by Build NS, are replacing the dam so that water level is maintained at higher levels throughout the year. This will be good for water quality, for wildlife, and people who use the lake for recreation.

Science & Engineering Studies

WLCC has made a difference. To help governments understand the importance of the dam, we commissioned a study by MECO Engineering. The report authored by Perry Mitchelmore outlined problems with the dam and the danger it posed to residences and road infrastructure in the area. This study was paid for with funds the WLCC raised thanks to our members and residents interested in the future of the lake.

We have a long history of water quality testing over many years. More than 20 years ago, the WLCC persuaded HRM to refrain from salting roads close to the lake. This has now been extended as common practice around other Halifax freshwater bodies. Later, in 2016, salt levels in the lake were specifically tested by David Patriquin, following which he wrote this article found on our website. [\[Link\]](#)

Members, Volunteers, and Experts

WLCC is run and powered by volunteers, but we don't work alone – we engage local professional expertise, a prime example being the MECO technical study of the old dam. We have organized and funded scientific studies on wildlife like the Common Nighthawk, an endangered species that breeds and nests in the Williams Lake watershed. We use scientific equipment on loan from Dalhousie University to conduct yearly and quarterly measurement of water levels and water quality.

Conservation & Protected Areas

We have promoted and helped bring about the protection of adjacent land, and drawn up proposals to protect additional land in our area:

WLCC was fundamental in bringing about the creation of the Shaw Wilderness Park [\[link\]](#), protecting its 379 Acres, which are now managed jointly by Nature Conservancy of Canada and HRM.

WLCC worked to get HRM to buy another 114 acres adjoining the Shaw Wilderness Park, opening up the possibility for it to be managed for conservation. This will prevent future development on the Southern shore of Williams Lake.

WLCC, working with the Backlands Coalition, is advocating for conservation of provincial crown lands in the Halifax/Purcells Cove Backlands. Recently the Province brought forward for public consultation the protection of a further 1,248 acres of Crown land for long term conservation. [\[link\]](#)

That means a total of 1,741 acres of land is either preserved or being considered for conservation.

Advocacy

We engage with HRM's Planning Department, sharing our expertise, observations, research and studies. Our input to developers and planners has helped design neighbourhoods which will have less impact on the lake. One example - WLCC Directors pushed for a community-driven planning process in the design and development of the Ravenscraig community. This included the construction of 2 engineered wetlands, a project where two WLCC Directors, and a colleague professor at Dalhousie, sat on the design committee for a whole year.

We regularly engage with all levels of government through public servants and politicians like Brendan Maguire, Patty Cuttell and Shawn Cleary. Andy Fillmore was highly engaged as our

former M.P. Connecting with and maintaining good communication with local representatives is an important part of what we do, and how we achieve results.

We Have Made a Difference

The positions we take at the WLCC are based on science and facts. We are patient – having spent close to 60 years working to resolve the complex issue of the dam. We listen, we engage, and we educate. The WLCC will continue making a difference. As anthropologist Margaret Mead famously said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”.