



# Remembering Alan Ruffman

by **HOWARD EPSTEIN** /// EAC Volunteer

PHOTO: The Canadian Press/Andrew Vaughan

2022 was a terrible year. Not only for the clear arrival of the climate effects organizations like the Ecology Action Centre have been predicting and documenting for the last 50 years, but also for the deaths of a number of friends and allies. The year ended with the death in his sleep of Alan Ruffman – Citizen Ruffman – on Dec. 28 at age 82.

Alan came to Nova Scotia from Ontario to do graduate work at Dalhousie University in geology. He became a marine geologist, while taking an active interest in all aspects of his science, and of science generally. Crucially for the EAC, he met and befriended its founders: Brian Gifford, Cliff White, Kathleen Flanagan, David Reynolds and a handful of others. In those early days, the EAC was a spin-off of a class project, housed happily by the university in the basement of the Forrest Building. Alan brought his science learning, his enthusiasm, his foresight, his good cheer, his warm voice and his unforgettable smile.

For decades, Alan along with his spouse, Linda Christiansen, a professor of sociology at Saint Mary's University, engaged in local

land-use planning issues while keeping an eye on the context of energy use. Alan established a consulting company, Geomarine, in a downtown historic stone building. Visiting his office was always a treat: stuffed full of papers, maps, rock samples and an air of bustle, it was accessed by stairs adorned with tree slices/rounds and whale bones collected on explorations in Newfoundland and Scandinavia. Alan wrote papers on a wide variety of subjects, becoming an expert on such topics as iceberg scour and the Titanic – on which he published a fine book.

I was fortunate to work with Alan in public consultations and formal hearings over such issues as the Sable Offshore Energy Project (oil and gas extraction) and sewage management for Halifax Harbour, as well as downtown land development proposals. The EAC and the other community organizations involved in these discussions would not have been able to do such an effective job of taking these matters to the court of public opinion without Alan. The good reputation of the EAC rests in no little measure on such efforts.

Alan and Linda lived for decades in a house overlooking the outer reaches of the Harbour, with views out their panoramic windows of container ships, whales and storms. If I were able to arrange it and it were still the mode, I would place Alan in a dory along with his papers, set it alight and consign him to the ocean. It would be a fitting memorial for Alan, our warrior and our friend.

**Howard** (he/him) was executive director of the EAC from 1991-1994. Subsequently he was elected as a municipal councillor and then MLA for Halifax Chebucto.