

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and committee members

- Hello, my name is John Beaton and I am the CEO of the Eastern-Strait Regional Enterprise Network.
- We are one of 6 Regional Enterprise Networks or REN's funded in part by the Dept. of Municipal Affairs and also in part by 5 municipalities including The Town and County of Antigonish, Port Hawkesbury, St. Mary's District and the Municipality of the District of Guysborough. We currently have a 6th municipality likely coming on to ESREN soon which is the Town of Mulgrave.
- Our role and the role of REN's in general is to perform regional economic development services led by business with accountability to them as well as to our funding partners.
- I'm here to provide my comments in opposition of Bill 85.
- Although we have 8 strategic focus areas, Investment Readiness is one of our most important files – we have put a priority on this area because we know that we have to have the right pond to attract the right fish. ~~we know~~
- On a personal level, I have been working in Business Development and Economic Development in various roles and locations of the province for 15 years including Halifax and Cape Breton as well as my current location in the Eastern-Strait Region. I was born and raised in Cape Breton so I'm quite familiar with the challenges and opportunities there.
- I've also observed the changing landscape of economic development over that time.
- It's a bit difficult for me to speak here today for two reasons: 1.) The Honorable Minister Mombourquette is heading Municipal Affairs, and has been a positive lead on our REN file with the province. And 2.) I know CBRM is facing challenges with regard to attracting a large shipping container terminal and logistics park. I can appreciate those challenges and the need to create the right conditions for investment. After all, within our region a container terminal has been on the horizon for a number of years.
- Yes, The municipal partners of ESREN experience the same kind of challenges. At least four of our municipal partners have or will soon be in possession of land and properties that they have been trying to best position for investment. ** land acquisition / land use development*
- So, I feel strongly that if I don't speak up, the municipalities in our REN will have another economic challenge put onto them – and uneven playing field for investment. *and race to bottom*
- Over the past year alone, ESREN has created an investment database highlighting the regional assets and promoting our region to investors and giving local municipalities and developers access to our economic information. Over the next year we hope to make the real estate portion of this work more robust. During the next year we are also evaluation the investment readiness potential of each of our municipal units so that we can develop a work plan to implement actions that improve the likelihood of new businesses locating to our region. ** often side*

Municipal Committee
I like Bill 85

Post

* Port Development Priority, - Marketing Strategy -

- CBRM is trying to position itself for a container terminal. Municipality of the District of Guysborough is doing the same. My reference of course is to Melford International Terminal.
- Everyone in our region knows that for the past decade or more, things have been slowly moving forward using only private sector investment. No land deals. No tax breaks.
- This year our region inches even closer to seeing a container terminal become a reality with the procurement of engineering services.
- Likely this project would have moved much sooner with similar breaks but strong, sustainable business cases are not built on such foundations. (look up examples)
- We are used to hearing talks of the Once NS: Now or Never Report (aka Ivany report) which challenged us to remove silos between municipal partners. The advice: More municipal cooperation and less competition. After all, when we look at the challenges all municipalities face in Nova Scotia, and to a greater degree rural municipalities such as demographic and population shifts, a charter that positions just one municipality for economic development and investment doesn't do much for economic equality across the province. *Property tax exemptions for specific municipalities*
- Despite the best intentions of Bill 85, I have to speak up against the charter because while it's a step ahead for CBRM, it's a big step back for the rest of province with the exception of Halifax.
- I also have a duty to represent the economic development interests of our municipal partners - and bill 85 most certainly does not improve the investment readiness circumstances that we've been working hard to address.
- The bill encourages an investment landscape of inequality in the province and sets us back to pre-MGA days where new business went to the municipality with the best financial incentives in the sale of its land - even at less than market value. Except under Bill 85, other municipalities do not have such liberties.
- In the spirit of the One Nova Scotia Report and provincial support of rural economic development - I have to say that Bill 85 is bad for business on a provincial scale.
- We must have such a charter and the Municipal Government Act must be amended to allow CBRM to sell land at ~~less than market value and offer tax breaks, than the same concessions should be made for all municipalities in Nova Scotia. Do it for all or do it for none.~~
- Thank you.

*Artificial
Incentives don't
build strong
business model*

* RFRs Speed time - Collaboration. *Competition*

* All business face challenges related to costs of doing business, is it fair to provide concessions to the elite few?

* Suspend Bill 85 - Consultation.

* Thank you