

[REDACTED]

From: Renee Clark [REDACTED]
Sent: April 17, 2022 6:22 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Objection to Bill 149

** EXTERNAL EMAIL / COURRIEL EXTERNE **

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Hello,

I am writing today to protest elements contained within the 2022-23 provincial budget, specifically the clauses in Bill 149 that will impose a further 2% per annum tax on non-residents who own seasonal properties here in Nova Scotia, whether purchased or passed down through generations.

Provincial interference in municipal affairs aside, I see this move as incredibly short-sighted. Since the government has framed this in terms of the economics, I will first do the same. Non-residents who have second homes here are an economic boon to the province. They give far more than they take, paying taxes, but without normally having children requiring education in Nova Scotia schools or needing ongoing health care from the ailing Nova Scotia system, nor making fulltime use of municipal services (though they still pay for them year round). When they are here, they purchase goods and services, eat at restaurants, patronize cultural events, and invite others “from away” to come to visit our province and share in all the good things they’ve found here. Some choose to operate their properties as short term rentals when they are not here, continuing the flow of tourism dollars into our communities. All of these activities are to our benefit and spin off into the local economy, especially in rural areas where seasonal residents tend to choose to be... areas like Digby Neck and Long and Brier Islands, where I spent several blessed years as the pastor, and where I continue to maintain connections with people who have become dear friends. People who are, yes, among those about to be deeply impacted by this tax grab. People who because of this measure I may well see this summer for the last time as they see no viable alternative to selling.

There is an illusion of the wealthy come-from-away that is being used to justify this measure. And though it may be true for some, it is certainly not so for all. Many people who by choice or necessity are not permanent residents of Nova Scotia but who are Nova Scotian by choice are simply not going to be able to absorb a tax of this kind. It will force them to leave, taking all the economic benefits of their time spent here with them. Their properties, many of them seasonal dwellings not suitable for year-round habitation or located in areas where there are few available jobs, will flood the market in these areas and lower property values for the remaining permanent residents and Nova Scotian recreational property owners of the communities in which these seasonal properties are located. Lowering property values and assessments leads to less tax revenue for municipalities, entities that are already struggling especially in rural areas.

For me though, this issue is even more about the rending of the social fabric. The people who are affected by this tax grab are our friends and neighbours, and in many cases our family. They are people who have chosen to put down or maintain roots here among us, either by purchasing properties or by maintaining homes that have been in their families for generations. This tax exploits an “us versus them” sentiment, blindsiding people who had no idea this was coming, and who further have limited voice and no vote with which to protest or defend themselves.

To be clear, I am a born and bred Bluenoser and the owner of a single residence... my modest WWII era prefab in North Dartmouth. Some might argue that I have no skin in this game. But I very much believe I do. People I love dearly and cherish spending time with, people who make positive contributions to our communities when they are here, are being blindsided by a misguided effort by this government to increase revenue on the backs of people who have no voice -

people who may well be forced to sell their Nova Scotia seasonal homes as the suddenness and scale of this measure (the highest in the country!) is simply more than they are financially able to sustain. What they are hearing us say is "Nova Scotia does not value you or want you here." They cannot be blamed for feeling that way. My assurances otherwise doubtless ring hollow.

It is one thing to introduce a modified deed transfer tax which would apply to transactions on a go-forward basis, a measure of which people would be made aware in the process of considering buying a second home in Nova Scotia. In that case, they are entering into the purchase fully aware of the financial penalty that we will impose on them for not being 'one of us'. Though still distasteful, I could perhaps stomach that. But Bill 149 goes beyond that, taking aim - retroactively at that! - at people who have in good faith chosen to be among us for as much of their time as they can manage, with no notion that we would do such a thing.

What has happened here is a shameless betrayal of trust for political gain. I have never been more ashamed to call myself a Nova Scotian, or more bitterly disappointed in a provincial government that in pursuing this avenue of generating revenue has proven to be unworthy of our trust... or our votes.

It is not too late for sober second thought, and for the light of reason to shine over our fair province once again. Think again. Please.

Sincerely,
Renée Clark
Dartmouth

Sent from my iPhone