

Law Amendments Committee

Office of the Legislative Counsel
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Re: Bill #407, Antigonish Consolidation Act

Attention: Committee Members

Chair, Hon. Brad Johns, PC
Vice Chair, Dave Ritcey, PC
Hon. Pat Dunn, PC
Hon. Steve Craig, PC
Melissa Sheehy-Richard, PC
Lorelei Nicoll, Liberal
Braedon Clark, Liberal
Gary Burrill, NDP
Lisa Lachance, NDP

Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

My name is Jack Bouckeno and I live in Oceanside, California. I am Licensed General Contractor with the State of California, California Contractors State License Board and have been I licensed builder since 1991. My wife grew up in Antigonish County, Nova Scotia and has strong ties to the area. I am a Canadian citizen. I am also a citizen of the United States. We do plan to return upon retirement to some degree and have a great deal of interest in the future of the community. That is why I am writing to you today to give you my insight on Bill #407, which might be quite a different perspective.

I have worked with and for many developers for many years. I have been a part of a multitude of large community developments and master communities. The concept of merging local governments is not new, far from it. It is however something I highly caution. The goal of limiting local government from a builder's perspective is about control. Fewer levels of government means fewer politicians to persuade, win-over, and convince of the value of any given project. The developers and investors want to control the how, where and when development occurs. The goal is to limit government interference in the investors and developers plan to build and profit. That is just the way it is.

Yes. Development is good. Of course it is, and it is going to happen. If the developers and investors have targeted an area for growth and profit—then they are coming! Arguments regarding water sourcing, or waste water facilities or utilities—those issues are not a problem. Developers deal with these issues all the time. If there's money to be made, they're coming!

As for the issue with local government, your Municipal government structure for the Town and for the County. That is not an issue either, not really—well, if a developer can minimize the number of politicians, well that does make movement easier—in particular the selection of location, ability to bypass local environmental restrictions and waiving otherwise required local procedures and local processes. Is this what is wanted? If you let the developers dictate to you, you will have growth but no control. You, as an elected body, need to know and plan for the problems that come with any growth, in particular, the level of growth projected for the region. This Bill #407 to consolidate the Town and County of Antigonish, in my opinion, is most likely a push from a developer to gain control of the community and limit local authority. That is what developers do and not just in Nova Scotia, but everywhere. Some communities fall for the pressure, some don't. Progress does not have to mean sacrificing local authority and sacrificing local controls. Local involvement will make for a stronger, steady, healthier growth. That is how I see it and well I've been a Contractor my whole life.

So the local leaders, the Mayor and the Warden have exhausted their role and their political careers are over. That is not something new, either. And although, the Progressive Conservatives are the current political party with a majority, well your elections are not very far off. The local representatives will lose their elected seats if you make this forced merger of the County and Town of Antigonish. Polls don't lie. The local people who are wholeheartedly expressing their true desire to have a voice—that's not a lie. The current local representatives will be out of office. Most likely, you will be out of office if you make this move to pass this Bill #407. Regardless, the developers are still coming! Nothing to do with any of you—it's nothing personal. It is about the return on the investment. Each Progressive Conservative member will have to stand on the sidelines as the replacement representatives take not only the credit for progress and economic development but credit for easing the temperament of the community and community leaders and providing transparency. You will have gained a very clear label of not listening, not representing the people, and failing to follow set democratic processes. Do yourselves and the whole region a big favor and let the people vote on this issue. Your local Municipal elections are just months away. Your Provincial elections are not too far off either. Very little is going to change in the immediate future.

My understanding is that this is in the courts—it is strange that any decision be considered prior to the court's decision. Any attempts to push this through without the final word of the justice, seems inappropriate to me.

Lastly, I would like to say I wish I could have presented virtually as I had planned. I am a better speaker than writer. I believe speaking in person would have a more meaningful impact. I did receive the calls back for scheduling and apologize for not being available at the time. I welcome questions for clarifications on my perspective on this situation from anyone reading this.

Sincerely,
Jack Bouckeno

