

Bill 100 – Law Amendments Committee
Nova Scotia Legislature – November 30, 2010

Robert Corlett

J. C. Mechanical Contractors Ltd.

Good afternoon, my name is Robert Corlett and I am the president of JC Mechanical Contractors, based in Truro, Nova Scotia.

To the chairman – the Honourable Ross Landry, Attorney General and Minister of Justice – committee members, clerk and staff: thank you for letting me come to you today to speak about Bill 100.

Here's a little background about JC Mechanical Contractors.

Now in politics, the initials JC have stood for a lot of things.

Jean Chretien.

Joe Clark.

John Crosbie.

Jean Charest.

But for our business, the initials JC stood for my dad, John Corlett, who started the business in 1971.

It all started for us as a small heating and plumbing company. As the company grew, we purchased a sheet metal shop in 1981, resulting in a full sheet metal operation, including ducting and HVAC.

In 1996 I partnered with my dad, we moved to a new location in the Truro Industrial Park. My dad John retired in 2003 and I took on a partner – Wade Redmond – who started with our company more than 20 years as an apprentice plumber.

Today, JC Mechanical provides plumbing, heating and HVAC services to a wide range of customers, including the private and public sectors throughout the Maritimes and residential customers in mainland Nova Scotia.

Safety is a constant focus in what we do and we are proud to be certified by the Nova Scotia Construction Safety Association. We are also members of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia and the Merit Contractors Association of Nova Scotia.

Our company's mission has five key elements – in no particular order:

- #1: to provide quality workmanship at competitive prices
- #2: to develop and maintain professional relationships with our clients and suppliers
- #3: to represent manufacturers of quality brand name products to provide meaningful and gainful employment for employees and their families
- #4: to foster an environment of continued education and training for our employees
- #5 to provide a safe workplace for our employees

Because of our success in delivering on this mission, JC Mechanical is able to give back to the communities of Truro, Bible Hill and Colchester County – with regular annual contributions to the Colchester Regional Hospital Foundation.

JC Mechanical has been honoured to provide quality, professional service to clients such as Metro Transit, Tantallon and Hubley Fire Stations, Colchester Regional Hospital, St. Martha's Hospital in Antigonish, right down to Mrs. Smith and her tap washers.

Although we may still be able to help Mrs. Smith with her tap washers, Bill 100 will pose clear and present danger to our commercial clients.

Despite nearly four decades of growth and success, it is no overstatement that Bill 100 poses a clear and present danger to a significant part of our business, as well as the jobs, wages and benefits that go with it.

A substantial part of our business – approximately 50% – has come through our area school board and government services.

Through standing offers and competitive bids, we provide the additional labour they need to handle work that goes beyond their staffing ability.

If Bill 100 was to pass, we would lose such valuable work by no longer being able to use skilled non-union trades people to meet the needs of our public sector customers.

In fact, the wording of Bill 100 is so vague that it could mandate general contractors to use union members, as well.

It would literally mean the end of our business and, most importantly, the jobs and wages of our employees.

We cannot afford to let Bill 100 pass into law in its current form.

Considering its potential impact on business owners and, perhaps more importantly, Nova Scotian workers, Bill 100 needs a closer look.

It is troubling that nobody asked us what effect these changes would have on our business before Bill 100 was introduced.

The Labour Department put out a discussion paper on merging labour and employment boards – but it was dead silence on issues like union membership, successor rights and giving all businesses – not just union businesses – a voice on this new Labour Management Review Committee to the Minister.

Why didn't the government consult us?

Why must Bill 100 pass so urgently without changes?

Why are some unions apparently saying this will be the first of many changes they are expecting will take place?

I know we have a majority government in this province and they can pretty much do whatever they want.

But I also hoped this government would be different.

I thought they would listen to people.

I thought they wouldn't rush into making decisions without knowing all the facts and taking the time to talk to employers like us.

Last week, the government released a job creation strategy.

Shouldn't fair labour laws be a part of that strategy?

In conclusion, I would like to say this, on behalf of my father who started this business almost 40 years ago, my current business partner, my workers, their families and our customers:

Please take whatever time you need to give our province a labour law that is fair to all Nova Scotians.

Please don't take away the voices of so many for the benefit of so few.

Please remember small town, successful businesses like ours.

Thank you.