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Halifax, NS B3H 4K8

May 16, 2016

Hon. Diana Whalen, Chair
Standing Committee on Law Amendments
Office of the Chief Legislative Counsel
CIBC Building - Suite 802
1809 Barrington Street
Halifax NS

RE: Bill No. 177 – Municipal Government Act (amended) and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended)

Dear Minister Whalen

Clause 10 of the *Municipal Government Act* impacts negatively on the democratic representation that all Nova Scotians should be able to expect of their municipal governments.

HRM is a very large and very complex municipality. Since amalgamation, a single council representing so many diverse areas has not been working to the benefit of individual areas.

My own neighbourhood, on Peninsula Halifax is the oldest part of one of the oldest and most historic cities in North America, but sometimes it seems that our City Council has little or no appreciation for that fact. That is very likely because, of the 16 Councillors, only 2 represent the Peninsula. The others have no stake in its future. So, Clause 10 as it now exists, effectively ensures that my neighbours and I have no voice at City Council on matters that are of great concern to us.

Heritage and cultural districts thrive in other cities and have proven to be of economic benefit, and I believe Halifax has much to gain by enhancing rather than destroying these sites. We are not opposed to sensitive development. However, some developers are engaged in outright destruction, in large part due to the makeup of City Council.

I would sincerely appreciate your consideration of the attached proposed amendment or a variation of its intent.

Thank you,


Dianne Marshall

cc. Members of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT

Government of municipality

10 (1) A municipality is governed by a council consisting of at least three members.

(2) One councillor shall be elected for each polling district in a county or district municipality and in a regional municipality.

(3) No more than two councillors shall be elected for each polling district in a town.

***Note:** This clause has resulted in the decimation of the heritage and historic sites of one of the most historic cities in North America. Why? Because the vast majority of Councillors (14 of 16) do not live on the peninsula; and therefore, do not have an attachment to it, or a stake in its survival.*

We welcome sensitive development, that takes the needs of the community into consideration and that is capable of blending the old with the new. Some developers seem to be able to do that. Others do not, and it is those developers that cause the most concern.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

(4) Halifax Regional Municipality shall be divided into three district councils, representing: Halifax Peninsula, Dartmouth, and Halifax County. And each District Council shall be comprised of 5 polling districts, with no more than one councillor per polling district.

(4a) Each District Council shall be responsible for matters relating to that district, and reporting of same to the Mayor and other District Councils.

(4b) Decisions of a development nature will be the sole responsibility of the District Council; and while the Mayor and other District Councils may provide input, the decision of the District Council on development matters that relate to its district, will be final.