



Revise Anti-SLAPP Bill to Address Northern Ontario Concerns: Northern Municipalities

December 2, 2014 - Northern Ontario Municipal leaders are expressing concerns that the Government of Ontario has moved forward with re-introduction of its anti-SLAPP legislation without proper consultations with industry, municipalities, and others who will be impacted by the proposed changes.

The law will weaken the protection of victims of public attack by allowing individuals and organizations that cause harm to others to seek a ruling without a proper legal case having been heard as to whether the complaint is valid.

"It is rare to see a level of government pass a law that is designed to give an aggressor more power than the harmed party, but as it is currently written Ontario's anti-SLAPP legislation does just that," said Al Spacek, Mayor of Kapuskasing and President of FONOM.

Of particular concern is the support this legislation has received from eNGOs that have been documented to receive foreign funds for the express purpose of harming Canada's resource economy.

"If this is something that Greenpeace and other foreign funded eNGOs want to see enacted, when we've already seen the explicit economic harm they purposely seek to cause our economy, we as a province have to be very leery about moving in this direction," Spacek added.

Groups that have mandates to attack Canada's oil and gas sector, pipeline proposals, forestry and aquaculture sectors have been demonstrated to receive funding from non-Canadian interests to purposefully disrupt economic and resource development in Canada.

As written, this law protects these professional campaigners that represent the business interests of their donors to the same degree it does a volunteer who is genuinely concerned about a local development proposal.

"We are calling on the government to work with Northern Ontario municipalities and our economic development partners to ensure the law strikes the balance of protecting well-meaning volunteers who fear being sued for participating in a decision, while ensuring that same level of protection is not afforded to people who are paid specifically to destroy our economy," said NOMA President Dave Canfield, who is Mayor of Kenora.

Northern Ontario leaders and stakeholders hoped to meet with the government prior to re-introduction of the bill to discuss specific amendments that would satisfy these and other concerns before the bill is debated in the legislature.

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