

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO LD 870 “AN ACT REGARDING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE LAND USE PLANNING COMMISSION”

Dear Senator Talbot-Ross; Representative Pluecker & Distinguished Members of the Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry Committee:

My Name is Paul Underwood and I am resident of Presque Isle. I currently serve as the Chairman of the Aroostook Board of County Commissioners and I am a former Commissioner of the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC).

I am strongly opposed to LD 870 and would like to make this committee aware of past history regarding reforms made in the early 2000’s that resulted in the present day formation and structure of the LUPC.

The reform bill was a major compromise to address grievances from the public, large and small property owners, as well as county commissioners that felt their concerns were not being heard.

The compromise that was reached brought together members of the legislature, the general public, land owners in the unorganized territories in Maine, as well as County Commissioners.

The Legislature at that time needed to respond to the multitude of citizen complaints but at the same time, did not want to give up total state control of Maine's wilderness, especially the unorganized territories that are important for our forestry and natural resource based economy.

The Land Owners, largely represented by the Maine Forest Council had concerns about the potential for different regulations in each county, but were also concerned about increasing regulations being imposed by the State in these local areas.

County Commissioners did not want to create another layer of bureaucracy and believed zoning and land use regulations should be considered a local matter.

The compromise resulted in a Board made up of a majority of locally appointed, locally vested individuals, nominated by each County with significant unorganized territory land base and confirmed by the Legislature.

It was a lot of hard work and give and take from all parties involved. The new board was to be made up of primarily of individuals with a working knowledge and experience of the unorganized territories in each County that is represented.

LD 870 would severely undermine and take away local control of Maine's unorganized territory regulations, land use, planning and zoning decisions. This is bad public policy for Maine residents, land owners and the general public that works, lives and recreates in Maine's vast unorganized territories.

I strongly encourage the members of this Committee to consider all facts presented and vote unanimously Ought Not to Pass on LD 870.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my concerns.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Underwood, Chairman

Aroostook County Commissioners