

Spruce Mountain Realty Buyer Broker  
168 Cushman Hill Rd.  
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To: David Farmer (Governor Baldacci), Charlene Tremblay (Senator Susan Collins), Diane Jackson (Senator Olympia Snowe), Matt Dubois (Congressman Mike Michaud), James Pineau (Congresswoman Chellie Pingree), State Senator Bruce Bryant, State Representative Jarrod Crockett

From: Marcel Polak,

Hello,

I am the owner/broker of Spruce Mountain Real Estate Buyer Broker in Bethel. I believe that the proposed lowering of the training ceiling in western Maine for the Massachusetts Air National Guard will have a seriously negative impact on the regional real estate market and its connected industries.

The EIS prepared by the Massachusetts Air National Guard completely lacks a substantive analysis of the economic impact on the region. The potential impact to real estate values and subsequent impact to the regional economy are not even mentioned.

The real estate market in western Maine has declined like the rest of the nation. The primary economy in the region for many years was manufacturing. This provided stable good paying jobs allowing many workers to own homes. Manufacturing in this area has been in a steady decline for many years, paralleling the national trend. This loss of manufacturing jobs has also contributed to a decline in primary home sales in parts of the region. The real estate market includes sales of existing homes, raw land, and new homes. New home construction provides for employment for many types of workers including carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc. It also provides employment for the forest industry (landowners, loggers, lumber mill workers, etc), one of the other traditional economic sectors. Currently, as the real estate market has seen a significant downward trend, so has the market for wood products in the region.

With a decline in primary home buyers, a significant portion of the current real estate sales in western Maine is now from second home buyers attracted to the many ski resorts, lakes, and other 4 season recreational opportunities. This is all part of the major tourism economy in the region. There has also been a growing number of retirees attracted to the region because of these same recreational opportunities and quality of life. This quality of life attraction has been documented in many studies such as Brookings Institution report- Charting Maine's Future 2006, and is the focus of the Maine Council on Quality of Place established by Governor Baldacci. The report and council both state that quality of place is one of the major economic drivers in Maine. The EIS mentions neither.

Retirees and second home buyers are discretionary buyers, unlike primary home buyers who are connected to a region because of employment. They do not have to buy property in a specific region and can alternately be attracted to areas of Vermont, NH, the Maine coast etc. In fact, this ongoing competition has impacted on the western Maine regional tourism industry's goal of attracting more tourists. Tourists, like discretionary home buyers, have choices.

Maine real estate brokers are required to have their seller clients disclose known material defects in the property. Sellers have to provide written disclosure forms to buyers with information about hazardous and toxic wastes, encroachments, etc. Real estate buyer brokers, representing their buyer clients, are a growing sector of real estate professionals. They owe their clients additional due diligence to determine material defects in the property and alert their clients. For example, buyer brokers should alert their clients to proposed development projects near the property, known sex offenders from State data base, etc. These are both ethical and legal responsibilities.

When low level flights are initiated in this region, sooner or later sellers and brokers will have to provide this information on the disclosure forms or otherwise alert their buyer clients. The main reasons people are buying second homes and considering retirement in the area are for the rural qualities of peace and quiet and the myriad recreational opportunities. They will not likely tolerate the significant intrusion and impacts of fighter jets flying at low altitudes. These real estate buyers have numerous alternate areas where they they can just as easily buy second homes and retire. This potential drop in demand will impact real estate prices by depressing them. This added stress to an existing challenged economy and real estate market is too damaging to consider.

In summary, the current Condor EIS pays minimum attention to potential impacts to the regional economy. There has been no attempt to consider the impact to real estate prices. At minimum, real estate brokers throughout the region should be consulted. The burden of proof should be on Massachusetts Air National Guard to show that their proposal will not negatively impact the local economy.

I respectfully request that you employ all legal and political channels to challenge the Massachusetts Air National Guard to comply with EIS standards and provide data and analysis that their proposal will not negatively impact real estate and the local economy. If they do not provide this, all efforts should be made to block them.

Sincerely,

Marcel Polak  
Owner/Broker