

# Developer George Armoyan banned from city buildings due to threatening behaviour

BRETT BUNDALE HALIFAX CITY HALL

Published October 24, 2014 - 1:37pm

Last Updated October 24, 2014 - 1:41pm



Nova Scotia businessman George Armoyan has been warned to stay away from Halifax Regional Municipality properties for six months. (File)

One of Halifax's largest developers has been banned from multiple municipal buildings.

George Armoyan, the maverick real estate mogul, investor and entrepreneur, was warned to stay away from the city properties for six months.

In an interview, Armoyan said he was visiting fellow developer Joe Ramia at his Bayers Road office in June when he decided to drop in on municipal planners located in the same building.

The planners were handling one of his applications for a mixed-use development on Quinpool Road at the corner of Robie Street.

"They made me wait for an hour and 15 minutes without giving me the courtesy to come out," said Armoyan, whose family company, Armco Capital Inc., is one of the largest development firms in Atlantic Canada. "Then all of a sudden I see police guys come over because I was tappin my feet and I was looking agitated and angry."

Armoyan claims city planners were stalling his development proposal by drawn-out delays, expensive studies and numerous revisions.

"I was trying to build a landmark for the city I can put my signature on," he said. "I don't need some jackass guy who doesn't know his elbow from his ass telling me what to do with my development."

A city spokesman confirmed that a protection-of-property notice was issued directing an individual to stay away from a municipal property.

"It's an extremely rare occurrence," Brendan Elliott said. "I would suggest that in this particular case it was because employees felt threatened."

...

After years of strong growth in Halifax's real estate market, the incident reveals the at-times acrimonious relationship between developers and city hall bureaucracy.

On one hand, developers argue they are responding to market conditions and trying to push the design envelope in Halifax. They are challengin what some consider antiquated planning rules to build developments that reflect a growing metropolis.

But on the other hand, city planners must walk a tightrope between being amenable to new development proposals, while still adhering to planning strategies and taking direction from council.

"We try to be nimble," said Bob Bjerke, Halifax's chief municipal planner. "Some of the plans might have been drafted quite awhile ago, and some things might have changed. We need to consider that."

Planners must carefully consider applications in light of municipal planning strategies and land-use bylaws, he said, while still giving weight to the broader needs of a changing city.

It's a delicate balancing act, said Andy Fillmore, a former senior city planner.

"Planners have an ethical obligation to represent the community's needs and the complexity in this is that the community includes both residents and people who are trying to build things," said Fillmore, vice-president of planning and development at the Waterfront Development Corp.

"But planners aren't just waiters taking orders from either the community or the applicant. They have to bring their professional experience and judgment that they worked hard to earn to bare on these applications."

Fillmore added that development applications will continue to be "difficult and polarizing" until Halifax gets the policy right in the regional centre it did for downtown Halifax.

...

A proposed development by one of Armco's company's, APL Properties Ltd., illustrates the animosity that can develop between developers and city planners.

The Quinpool Road proposal would see a 10-storey office tower and parking garage demolished. In its place, APL initially said it would build a 22-storey tower and an 11-storey tower erected on top of a common podium.

But Armoyan said he was surprised by a staff report presented to council last June that recommended launching the process to amend planning rules for the development but also called for more changes.

"I would be naive to say we didn't expect some changes," Armoyan said. "They never disclosed to us before the council decision was made that these were the conditions that council was approving."

Yet the changes to building height, mass, density, shadowing and spacing between the towers were intended to make the mixed-use development more livable — a desirable goal for 165 residential units.

"If density is increased to the point where public amenities are negatively impacted and buildings are less livable due to limited setbacks, privacy or access to light," the staff report said, "it could result in a situation where the desirability of living in these urban areas is somewhat limited and population growth stagnates."

In an extraordinary move, the Armoyan company ignored the changes requested by council. Instead, APL resubmitted essentially the same designs in August, but with residential towers of 28 and 12 storeys respectively — a total of seven extra floors and 201 units.

"It is certainly unusual to put aside council's direction," Bjerke said, adding that planning staff will continue to work with the applicant.

But Armoyan isn't interested in working with municipal planners. He tried to sidestep planning rules by requesting to present directly to regional council this week.

The city clerk denied the request, noting that regarding planning matters, "it is not the practice of council as a body to hear from either the applicant or members of the public except through written submission or at a public hearing."

In a letter to mayor and council, Armoyan pointed out that he is "one of HRMs largest taxpayers" and as such should have the right to appear before council.

The developer said he "wasn't looking to bend the rules" or get special treatment. "What I'm looking for is to get council to hold their people accountable."

Meanwhile, Armoyan has launched four lawsuits against the city and municipal staff.

"I will sue them for every God damned thing because I'm not backing down," he said. "They're making our life miserable. I'll make theirs miserable, too."

*About the Author»*

**BRETT BUNDALE HALIFAX CITY HALL**

E-Mail: [bbundale@herald.ca](mailto:bbundale@herald.ca)  
Twitter: @CH\_bbundale



**From Around the Web**

Promoted Links by Tabo

[Help For Canadians Living With Multiple Illnesses](#)  
Mediaplanet

[Inmate in hospital after assault at Dartmouth jail](#)

[NSEMMHL rookies leaving early impressions](#)

[6 Mistakes Women Make at Work](#)  
Monster

[11 Cheap Cars that Make You Look Rich - #3 is Amazing](#)  
www.ConsumerCarNews.com

[Seeing is believing](#)

**From The Web**

- [Help For Canadians Living With Multiple Illnesses](#) (Mediaplanet)
- [6 Mistakes Women Make at Work](#) (Monster)
- [11 Cheap Cars that Make You Look Rich - #3 is Amazing](#) (www.ConsumerCarNews.com)
- [For The Men: Signs A Woman Is Flirting With You](#) (MadameNoire)
- [Guilt Free Desert: Caramel Slice](#) (Lululemon)

**More from the Chronicle Herald**

- [Inmate in hospital after assault at Dartmouth jail](#)
- [NSEMMHL rookies leaving early impressions](#)
- [Cole Harbour's Darryl Dillman a finalist on CBC series Canada's Smartest Person](#)
- [Halifax archaeologist unravelling the mystery of buried clothes](#)
- [Curse of the invasive crustacean](#)

Promoted Links by Tabo

**COMMENTING POLICY - UPDATED AUG. 19, 2014**

As a Chronicle Herald subscriber, you have the added benefit of commenting on articles.

**Sign into your existing account or subscribe today for as little as 43¢ per day.**

