

From: "Gordon Price" <gprice@nsac.ca>
To: <legc.office@gov.ns.ca>
CC: <lenorezannmla@bellaliant.com>
Date: 10 May 2012 10:05 pm
Subject: Re: Law Amendments Bill 84

1845-346 (5/12)

Dear Members,

I would like to speak to the current bill, Bill 84, regarding the merger of Nova Scotia Agricultural College and Dalhousie University which is in front of the House today. As a faculty member at NSAC for the past five years, I have seen how much this institution has to offer Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada in continuing to build and grow the agricultural sector. Nova Scotia Agricultural College brings a rich history and tradition to Dalhousie University. The joint future of these institutions may be bright and I support the principle of this merger as a means of strengthening our ability to continue providing research and education focused on enhancing the agricultural sector in a sustainable and innovative way.

Notwithstanding the above, there continues to be considerable anxiety among faculty and staff about the changes that will occur once the merger is finalized. Much of the anxiety has stemmed from a lack of clear and definitive information from any source regarding how the merger will unfold. The bargaining agent for NSAC employees, the NSGEU, continues to express their concerns to us regarding being excluded from the merger discussions and about the lack of specific protections that have been afforded previous civil servants devolved from government. Some of the concerns relate to Long Service Award, Pension Superannuation and Supplementary Pensions, and Long-Term Disability/Medical Benefits. During official meetings, government and Dalhousie officers made clear that the intent would be to honour these issues in some form under the legislation. In examining the current legislation, it is apparent that while Pension Superannuation is protected there are still benefits many of my colleagues will have accrued under the Civil Service but may lose under a new employer, such as the Long Service Award. As a relative newcomer to the Civil Service, this is not a benefit that has a particularly large impact on me but I know from conversations with my co-workers that it factors into their decisions about the future. I am not an expert in this field and so must defer to the NSGEU's, as our current bargaining agent, experience in dealing with these matters.

What I would like to specifically speak about regarding Bill 84 is that it provides a glimpse at a process which has somehow forgotten about how and why institutions like NSAC function. NSAC's reputation has been built on the people of come in to work every day to serve the students, the community, and the province. At this particular time of change, people have continued to express some concerns regarding how the merger will affect their future work environment and livelihood. In most instances, there have been few answers or answers with few specific details. However, Bill 84 is very specific and yet still fails to address the concerns expressed by both the employees who make NSAC function and the NSGEU, as their agent. While there may be reasons why the bill is being moved forward in such a quick manner, there are strong reasons to pause and consider these concerns being expressed. I see a positive future with Dalhousie University but it is my strong belief that it must be forged through application of the same standards in legislation that have been afforded other groups in the past. In principle at least, this would recognize the contributions of people who have served the province and the institution for many years.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Yours Truly,

Gordon W. Price

Dr. Gordon W. Price, P.Ag.
Innovative Waste Management Research Chair
Department of Engineering
Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Truro, NS