

To the members of the Law Amendments Committee of the Nova Scotia Legislature regarding the proposed elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate:

I grew up in Cape Breton and was aware that I would have to leave the island to pursue my career. With every provincial government before this Liberal government, even when fiscal times were tough, I still felt valued. It felt apparent that my efforts to remain in Nova Scotia, in spite of financial hardships, were meaningful. I have pursued whatever opportunities I had access to, whether that means being on the back of a tractor in the blazing sun or sticking my (Sydney) city girl arm into a cows' stomach.

Suffice it to say that I love this province. However, without continued support from the government it will become increasingly difficult for my peers and I to work together to create economic opportunities for posterity. Why should educated young adults in this province receive a lower salary and pay elevated taxes in a province that does not value my continued support for communities and families? I live a modest life and barely make the monthly minimum payments on my debts while working at a university as a researcher, without the Graduate Retention Rebate I will have little choice but to leave Nova Scotia for more gainful employment.

On September 26, 2013 the Chronicle Herald's headline read "Census: We're losing people" - losing people to the tune of 21,542 people a year (Statistics Canada 2013). Perhaps it is an easier pill to swallow in a more affluent family that is able to wield the gears of nepotism in their favor, education or no. But for most young people in Nova Scotia who grew up wanting to achieve their potential while being able to afford to remain here long term, having the rug swept from beneath us so suddenly without the respect to grandfather current recipients in, is likely the final nail in the coffin.

I am a reasonable individual and I know for every budget choice to fund there is another that gets neglected. That is why I found Premier McNeil's proposal to remove sales tax on gas prices especially egregious. That income funds social programs required to sustain and inspire the population of NS. This tax should remain in place so we can begin to modify how we live, travel and conduct business in a sustainable manner. Not to mention that when gas prices really inflate beyond what we are seeing now, we will need that buffer to cushion us from an economic nosedive. The pattern of decision making currently going on in the provincial government is going to turn Nova Scotia into a province I don't recognize and does not reflect my values as a citizen.

I have never felt so disheartened and undervalued by my provincial government as I do with the current proposed elimination of the Graduate Retention Rebate. Nor have I ever been more motivated to get involved politically as I currently feel on this issue. Legislature committee members, I implore you, help young people, like me, remain working toward a better future in the province we love, and consider measures to keep the Graduate Retention Rebate program funded.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely,

Terri MacPherson B.Sc., M.Sc.