

Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Joy, and I am a student at the University of King's College and Dalhousie University. I have been studying here, part-time, for seven years. I have a learning disability and come from a low-income, very broken home, and it has been a great struggle for me to progress through my degree, particularly as tuition has become more and more unaffordable.

There are a number of major points in Bill 100 which concern me deeply, but I will address only two of them in the time that I have been allotted.

Firstly, I fear for the fate of our universities in their ability to exist as universities per se. Bill 100 would require any university seeking a revitalization plan to orient its programming and research towards "contributing to social and *economic development and growth* in the Province", by "turning research into *business opportunities*", and by "improving... their [programs'] *relevance* to students and the wider society and *economy*" (Section 12 (1-g), Bill 100, emphasis my own). In effect, this legislation would turn university (and student) interests exclusively towards the market, and away from studies which concern our primary thinking about and understanding of humanity. This would transform our universities radically, and take them away from their essential role as a "universitas magistrorum et scholarium", or "community of teachers and scholars", who come together in the spirit of inquiry to search for truth.

Students who wish to go to trade schools, go to trade schools. Students who wish to enter the diminishing salaried professional class already make their way into the dentistry, medical, and law programs that we have on offer in Nova Scotia. These goals, though very honourable, are not meant to exist at the core of the university mandate. Students go to university because they want to question the functioning of society and the world at large, to grow as people, to develop their general intellectual skills and literacy, and to acquire the functional critical tools they need to participate in the daily lives of their communities. These are the skills and changes that are, broadly speaking, brought about by the study of arts, the humanities, and the social sciences, at least some of which every student at a university in Nova Scotia is required to study. These faculties, however, would in no way fall under the mandate of "economic development" (nor should they), and will therefore fall to the axe of Bill 100. Universities will instead be forced to focus on programs that exist to advance the interests of various industry and business concerns, in the name of buoying a slumped market.

Secondly, and very relatedly, I am alarmed by the power that this bill would give government to underwrite the independence of our universities, which will inevitably effect the ability of our scholars to criticize (or even to conduct research on) the contentious issues of the

day. Bill 100 dictates in Section 12 (1-h): “[A university's revitalization plan must include] a plan for the effective exchange of knowledge and innovation with the private sector, including excellent collaboration between the university and industry”. This again lays our universities at the foot of market interest, and will lead only to the promotion and domination of some theories, questions, and models, while suppressing dissenting arguments and areas of research concerned with alternative, though perhaps less saleable, ideas. Academic freedom is a foundational part of our democracy, and it is being needlessly repealed with this bill.

My statement on these points should not be taken apart from the rest of Bill 100. Concerns over academic freedom and the independence of universities do, of course, come hand-in-hand with concerns about the proposed disposal of collective bargaining and agreements between the universities and their unionized employees and professors. For these reasons, and for the many which have been presented to you today, I ask you to strike down Bill 100. At stake here is truly the heart and soul of the university, as an institution oriented towards the formation of engaged citizens, rather than automatons. What we face is the death of creativity, questioning, criticism, risk, and experimentation, in the name of an economically secure future that none of us believes is coming. It is surely worth noting that I am able to speak to you so eloquently, and am indeed able to do my civic duty here, because I have received an education in the humanities at a university, and because I have a national students' organization and a union here to support me as I advocate for students. If this bill passes, both of these things may indeed be taken from me.

Thank you for listening.