



Notes for a Submission

By

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To the
Law Amendments Committee
On
Bill 109 -
Tourism Nova Scotia Act

April 30, 2015

Introduction

Thank you, Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak to you about Bill 109 – *Tourism Nova Scotia Act*. Our President Joan Jessome is away, and I am here speak on her behalf about this Bill.

The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU) is the largest union in the province representing approximately 31,000 workers across the public sector in the provincial government, corrections, health care, public schools, community colleges, universities, municipalities, and community organizations. For the Civil Service, we currently represent approximately 7,500 members, of which 100 will be devolved to this new “private-sector led Crown Corporation”.

Over the last 20 years, NSGEU members have faced an almost endless stream of reorganizations, restructuring, amalgamations, mergers and devolutions. This has included at least nine different groups who transferred in and out of the civil service such as the following:

- Department of Health employees designated to the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre – 1996;
- Department of Education employees designated to the Nova Scotia Community College – 1996;
- Public Health and Drug Dependency employees in Department of Health designated to Regional Health Boards – 1997;
- Economic Development employees (civil service) designated to NSBI – 2001;
- Property Assessment employees (civil service) designated to the Property Valuation Services Corporation – 2006;
- Children's Aid Society employees transferred into Department of Community Services (civil service) – 2006-2011;
- Continuing Care employees transferred to the District Health Authorities – 2009;
- NSAC employees (civil service faculty and staff) designated to Dalhousie University – 2012
- DHA and School Board employees as well as civil service members to shared service organization within the government – 2014.

Now, we have this new entity called "Tourism Nova Scotia" replacing the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency which was only created on September 13, 2011 by Order-in-Council. Less than four years later, we wonder what has changed that would necessitate a move to a Crown Corporation outside of government. What was so bad or ineffective about the current Agency that required this move?

We recognize the importance of tourism and of the Ivany Commission's Goal 14 to double the revenues from tourism, but we are not convinced that this requires a move to a private-sector led Crown Corporation. We appreciate the important role that business leaders can play in tourism, but I want to remind you of the important role and extensive contributions to tourism played by our 58 members who had worked for many years in seven Provincial Parks and the Visitor Information Centres in Pictou and Digby. Who will replace the vital roles and services they provided? Will the new Corporation address this gap?

Where will front-line workers fit in this new model and approach? How will the four stated goals of this Corporation be achieved if there isn't broad collaboration and participation by all parts of our population, regions, and sectors? Surely, this is the main message of the Ivany Commission, not simply, abdicating leadership by the government and the public sector, and turning everything over, or at least, the major responsibility, to the private sector. All groups and peoples including front-line workers and their unions have an important role to play.

We are pleased to see the many transitional provisions provided in Sections 23 to 28 in this Bill. However, we are concerned about what the new Corporation as employer will be seeking when the negotiations begin for a new collective agreement? Will they be seeking the same types of concessions in wages and benefits that the government is generally now seeking across the public sector? Will they be blaming employees for having fair and decent wages and benefits

and their detrimental effect on tourism and the bottom-line of this new Corporation.

We want to remind the government of its signed commitment to observing the "Five Point Quality Public Service Protection Plan" which the Premier signed on September 20, 2013, a copy of which is attached to this submission. This Plan commits the government to not privatizing or contracting out a public service to the private sector:

- without public consultation and demonstrable evidence
- without a full and open review by an independent Review Agency or individual
- without ensuring that public sector workers and their representatives having standing in the review process
- without providing that the reviewing agency or individual issuing a public report, and
- without ensuring that any employees moving to a new employer will be able to maintain all existing rights, benefits and protections.

In conclusion, we wonder about why this new Corporation is being established when the previous Agency was less than four years old. We question why the private sector has to be in the lead, when we surely want all groups, regions and sectors, including front-line workers, community organizations, and municipalities, to contribute as well. We are concerned what will happen to the vital work and years of contributions of 58 Provincial Park and Visitor Information Centre workers? Will this be a sign of more cuts to front-line workers in tourism-related jobs across the province?

We urge the government to observe its commitment to follow the "Five Point Quality Public Service Protection Plan" which the Premier signed on September 20, 2013, in the devolution of the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency to this new Corporation. There could be a later effective date to allow this review to occur.

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak with you, and we welcome any questions and comments.





Five Point Quality Public Service Protection Plan for Nova Scotia

Whereas the trend to privatize public services is increasing in Nova Scotia despite the absence of a mandate or policy to do so, and whereas, Nova Scotians deserve to be fully involved in assessing the impact of privatization on the quality of public services, and on the province's communities and workers, therefore,

- A provincial public service will not be privatized or contracted to the private sector without public consultation and without demonstrable evidence that privatization will lead to improved services for Nova Scotians.
- A decision to privatize or contract out a service will not be made without a full and open review by an independent and mutually agreed upon Review Agency or individual, who will ensure full cost/ benefit analyses and comprehensive social and economic impact studies are conducted.
- Public sector workers and their representatives and other interested parties shall have standing in the review process.
- The reviewing agency or individual will issue a final report and recommendation and will table the report and all studies or analyses to the House of Assembly and/or the Legislature's Public Accounts Committee.
- In the event that a specific privatization is recommended and found to be in the best interest of Nova Scotians, employees will have the ability to move to the new employer with all existing rights, benefits and entitlements.

I hereby support and endorse the "Quality Public Service Protection Plan,"


Stephen MacNeil, Leader, Nova Scotia Liberal Party
MacNeil


Date