

LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE

Red Chamber, Province House

Friday, October 18, 2019



Bill #193 - Massage Therapist Titles Protection Act

- 1:00 p.m. 1. Monica Miller
- 1:15 p.m. 2. Amy-Lynne Graves, President
Massage Therapists' Association of Nova Scotia

**Bill #201 - Municipal Government Act (amended) and
Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended)**

- 1:30 p.m. 1. John Traves, Counsel
Halifax Regional Municipality

Bill #192 - Municipal Elections Act (amended)

1. Mayor Mike Savage
 John Traves, Counsel
Halifax Regional Municipality

Bill #203 - Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act

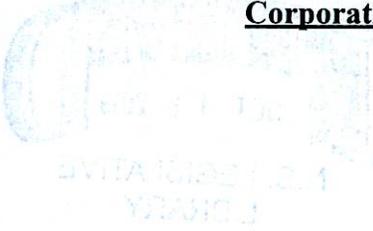
- 1:45 p.m. 1. Paul Cavalluzzo
Nova Scotia Crown Attorneys' Association
- 2:00 p.m. 2. Nan McFadgen
CUPE Nova Scotia
- 2:15 p.m. 3. Jason MacLean, President
NSGEU
- 2:30 p.m. 4. Martin Herschorn, Q.C.
 Director of Public Prosecutions
Public Prosecution Service
- 2:45 p.m. 5. Raymond Larkin, Q.C.
- 3:00 p.m. 6. Paul Wozney, President
Nova Scotia Teachers' Union

Bill #189 - House of Assembly Act (amended)

No representation

Bill #197 - Companies Act (amended), Co-operative Associations Act (amended) and Corporations Registration Act (amended)

No representation



#4
Savage
Presentation

Law Amendments presentation re the Municipal Elections Act

Mayor Mike Savage

Friday, October 18, 2019

Good afternoon. I am joined today by HRM's Legal Director John Traves.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the members regarding a provision I feel should be included in amendments to the Municipal Elections Act.

Let me preface my remarks by noting how much I value the strong working relationship between the Province of NS and the Halifax Regional Municipality. I know this government recognizes that the strengths of Halifax are indeed the strengths of Nova Scotia.

As you consider the slate of amendments before you, please know that we that the government has approved other initiatives that Council has requested, including making our elections more transparent and fair.

We asked for and received the right to bring in more stringent campaign finance requirements. Next year's municipal elections in Halifax will be the first to have meaningful regulations governing campaign contributions and expenditures and duration of campaign activities.

I am making my first appearance at Law Amendments because I believe Canadian newcomers are making us a better province. The recognition of that contribution to Nova Scotia should include a right to vote in municipal elections.

To be clear, I am not here at the behest of Halifax Regional Council, though I note that Council passed a motion on Aug. 5, 2014 to seek legislative amendments to extend municipal voting rights to permanent residents.

What Halifax and Nova Scotia need more than anything else is people: to live here, work here, study here and to invest here. In opening this legislation, we have an opportunity to make a progressive change that aligns with our shared desire to grow the population and the economy of this province.

With the important exception of the M'ikmaq people, ours is a city shaped by the hard work of immigrants.

From those first early settlers, to home children and war brides, to waves of people over generations fleeing conflict or seeking better opportunities for their families, we have built today's Halifax – the thriving economic and cultural heart of Atlantic Canada.

Halifax is home to Pier 21 where one million immigrants landed between 1928 and 1971, too many of whom quickly headed to more populous cities to our west.

But these are different times, and our city – and by extension our province - is blessed with new possibilities. We are experiencing population growth and witnessing the aging population stats edge back down.

For that we have Canadian newcomers to thank – but we want more, and we want to keep them. The Ivany Commission's urgent call to action was clear on this point: immigration is vital to our future.

And we are experiencing its benefits in Halifax and across Nova Scotia, with population at an all-time high. In Halifax, we have seen three consecutive years of record population growth between 7,000 and 8,500/per year. (*SOURCE: Halifax Partnership Quarterly Economic Snapshot – summer 2019*).

This growth is largely as a result of immigration, followed by interprovincial migration, and less so from intraprovincial migration. In short, our growth is not coming at the expense of other communities.

In the second quarter of 2019 alone, this province received 2,124 immigrants – the highest for any quarter since data was collected going back to 1946 (*SOURCE: Finance and Treasury Board NS – Nova Scotia Quarterly Population Estimates as of July 1, 2019*).

We currently have about 29,415 permanent residents in the Halifax region (*SOURCE: 2016 Census data: Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity Highlight table*)

Municipal voting rules are not static. They have evolved over time to include women, First Nations people, and those who do not own property. The history of voting rights is about removing arbitrary restrictions on who can vote.

Whether you were born in Halifax or came here from another land, municipal government impacts your life.

At the city we are rightly responsible for serving everyone who lives within our boundaries, and the people who choose to live here should have a say in the affairs of their city.

I don't feel that a Canadian citizen who moves here from Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto and can cast a ballot with six months residency is necessarily any more knowledgeable or involved in our community than someone who moves here from outside Canada.

And yet, under the Elections Act, a person is not eligible to vote until he or she has obtained Canadian Citizenship, which can only be applied for if they are a permanent resident who has lived in the country for a minimum of three years out of the last five years.

Add to that the processing times and throw in the four-year municipal election cycle, and it could take years to be welcome at a polling station.

And yet, long before they take an oath of Canadian citizenship, permanent residents contribute much to our city. They pay taxes, including property taxes, along with fees for municipal programs and transit use.

They are our friends, neighbours, coaches, volunteers, entrepreneurs, tradespeople, researchers and professionals.

Extending the vote sends an important welcoming message to anyone who chooses to live in Halifax.

This is not a radical idea – it has been pursued in cities like Toronto and Vancouver and it has been implemented in many more cities and countries around the world. Indeed, according to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, 45 democracies around the world have extended voting rights to foreigners to varying degrees.

If we act now we would be the first province in Canada to enshrine this right in legislation.

In giving permanent residents the same municipal voting rights as Canadian citizens, we tell them they're needed and their participation is valued in building a more diverse, prosperous and progressive Halifax and Nova Scotia.

We say we no longer support the current practice of taxation without representation.

It's time to give voice to the very people we are counting on to help create the economic future of our city and our province. I encourage you to make this very positive amendment to the Municipal Elections Act.