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**From:** Elizabeth Booth [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** March 14, 2025 12:33 PM  
**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Subject:** Bill No. 1 – An Act Respecting Government Organization and Administration

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Given that the amendments to Bill 1 that the Premier and NS government committed to have yet to be published, these are concerns raised with respect to Bill #1 – An Act Respecting Government Organization and Administration as introduced February 18 2025.

This Bill erodes my faith in the current provincial government, reduces accountability and oversight, and builds a work environment filled with distrust. I don't understand why the government would need these specific provisions in place if they are, in fact, working in the interest of Nova Scotians.

The following sections are of particular concern to me, and a fair number of fellow residents in the Waverley Fall River Beaver Bank Electoral District.

Part 1 - Auditor General Act:

- this entire section is unnecessary. The Auditor General has historically discussed their findings with the government, it's part of their role to do so. This part of the 'act' removes the Auditor General from being able to do their job as an independent voice. The concern is that once you do not have an impartial level of oversight, decisions will not be made objectively. Being a former auditor myself, I can tell you it is a highly collaborative role as required by the IIA (Institute of Internal Auditors). It is also a role that balances the effectiveness of business processes with the need for due diligence, all through an unbiased lense.

-Note even though it has been stated publicly that this section will be repealed or changed, these changes have yet to be public knowledge. Therefore, until the changes are made public, my comments stand and I reserve the right to comment on those changes.

Part II - Civil Service Act

This needs to be repealed.

The civil servants in this province, both unionized and non unionized play a pivotal role in ensuring the inner workings run smoothly. There is no doubt, as with a lot of other departments, that some efficiencies could be gained in how certain things work within this group. However, there is also a high rate of attrition at play (significant proportion of employees reaching retirement age) that could be leveraged without the need to dismiss anyone without cause. This would lead to an environment ripe for harassment and favouritism, and with the possibility on any given day of being fired without cause this also leads to a less than productive work environment to say the least. It is not just to allow anyone, in this day and age, to work in this type of environment.

Notwithstanding any other enactment, including the Labour Standards Code, but subject to the terms of a collective agreement, a deputy head may dismiss an employee in the department without cause and compensate the employee in accordance with the regulations.

#### Part V - Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

- this section needs to clearly define what is meant by "... trivial, frivolous or vexatious"... If I look up the definitions here's what I find:

trivial: *adjective* - of little value or importance

frivolous: *adjective* - not having any serious purpose or value

vexatious :- denoting an action or the bringer of an action that is brought without sufficient grounds for winning, purely to cause annoyance to the defendant

Based on these Oxford dictionary definitions there is a somewhat objective aspect to each of these words. What one person may perceive as annoying, of little value may well be very relevant to another individual.

I have no doubt there are freedom of information requests that are in fact vexatious and frivolous. And from what I have seen published, their numbers are low. That being said, in the context that frivolous and vexatious are adjectives and left to the perception of the person in receipt of those requests, I feel the Information and Privacy Commissioner is the person who is best suited to make that call. I fully support that office having the power, however I do NOT support that power being with the heads of public bodies, as outlined in this bill.

#### Part X - Private Ways Act

This part of the act is very unsettling as it bypasses an owner's right to limit access to their property. One would hope that this would only be involved once 'reasonable' attempts to come to an agreement have been made, and would also take into account specific reasonable conditions for the land owner to refuse this access - perhaps out of concern for their own safety? I read there were some provisions under section 4 that the right of way sought must be located so as to not unreasonably disturb the quiet use and enjoyment of that owner. Again, this would need further definition.

There are a number of concerns over the "Act Respecting Government Organization and Administration" as it is currently written, however it is not impossible to address a number of these concerns. The changes required would not cost the government any money, and if made would help gain goodwill and faith in our provincial government at a time, with the external threats from the US, we need to come together. There is enough distrust of our neighbouring American government, we would do well to not add to that a distrust of our own provincial representatives.

Please act in the best interests of those who you represent in Nova Scotia.

Regards

Elizabeth Booth

Member of Waverley Fall River Beaver Bank Liberal Electoral District Association