

Monday March 17 2025 – Public Bills Committee

Regarding: Bill 12 - An Act Respecting Advanced Education and Research

Dear Members of the Public Bills Committee,

**I request that you do not pass Bill 12.** It is an unprecedented removal of the liberty of our higher education institutions, and grants the Minister enormous amounts of control over decisions being made regarding these institutions.

There are so many clauses that are problematic, but as I read them clauses 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 14 c, 18, 19, 20, 23 and 26 greatly enhance the powers of the Minister to intervene in the governing process of our post-secondary institutions. They remove the capacity to have multiple voices and perspectives on governing our education systems. They make funding conditional to compliance to Ministerial dictates. They create situations where standstills in boards can occur between opposing views and the high potential for interference by the Minister. They remove other bodies of government from having a say or an active role in the relationship between post-secondary education and the Minister. They shackle our research and educational institutions to the viewpoints of the Minister and its appointments.

Nova Scotia's education problems have not been at its post-secondary education. From people who have studied in other provinces and experienced other educational systems, Nova Scotia's Colleges and Universities are well sought after, world renowned and respected. However, it is our approach to elementary and secondary education that is still lacking. For the Minister of Education to want to overhaul so much of our post-secondary education when the problems that exist are not created by them is unjustified.

Cape Breton owes its increased demographic and economic return in great part to Cape Breton University. Université Sainte-Anne answers the needs of French speaking communities and those who wish to invest in a French language education. These needs may not match with those of the Minister. Dalhousie University has led the way for over 200 years and is recognised by the world's scientific communities and the business venture sector for its great hubs and innovations. I myself having graduated from two universities understand the importance of social studies and sciences, that may not appear to meet the needs of the government of a certain time period, but answer the needs of populations over multiple generations, cultures, languages and economic spheres of interest.

Government intervention can have positive impacts if its balanced and collaborative such as aligning strategically to address common goals for our communities or our nations, providing funding and resources that benefit or enhance research capabilities and infrastructure, and where government oversight ensures accountability. However, excessive government intervention reduces academic freedom limiting the independence of educational institutions on research topics and methodologies, leads to homogenization of ideas that can marginalize diverse viewpoints and stifle innovation, and increase the administrative burden of institutions and government departments. If the autonomy and independence of the educational institutions are not respected by the government than the negative impacts will out-weight the positive ones. A collaborative approach that respects academic freedom while providing strategic support can create a dynamic and inclusive research environment, and requiring funding reporting is acceptable but shouldn't be coercive.

However, as I read Bill 12 the level of government intervention seems unbalanced and unacceptable.

What is even more worrisome with this Bill is when combined with Bill 1 it creates an environment that is primed for removal of scientific peer-reviewed information from our learning communities, and within our communities themselves. It creates a system of education reminiscent to that in Quebec province prior to its quiet revolution of the late 1960s, where the ideology of a controlling minority shapes the minds of the younger generations, informs government policies and restricts the liberties of those who think differently or challenge the status quo. As a child of Babyboomers who lived through this revolution, I am keenly aware of the impact education and science have on permitting people to be free, to implement the best decisions for the well-being of their communities, and invest in the right endeavors to obtain financial independence. Bill 12 as I read it is much too intrusive by Ministerial authority into the education systems of Nova Scotia.

As I have never worked inside a Nova Scotia College, University or research organisations, I leave it up to them to share the specifics of each section of Bill 12. However, I strongly recommend that the Bill not pass as it is written. The over-reach of the Minister's intervention into so many aspects of our post-secondary institutions and in research have to be removed. Multiple voices make better decisions than one voice that serves only its interest.

Sincerely,  
Chantal Gagnon

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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**From:** Chantal Gagnon [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** March 14, 2025 7:27 PM  
**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Subject:** Monday March 17th, Public Bills Committee - Written Submission Bill 12  
**Attachments:** PublicBillsCommitteeMarch172025Bill12.pdf

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Dear Public Bills Committee,

Please find attached in PDF format my written submission regarding Bill 12 - An Act Respecting Advanced Education and Research.

Regards  
Chantal Gagnon  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### **Written Submissions to the Public Bills committee**

Nova Scotians ask you to rescind (or vote no) to Bills 1, 6, 11, 12 and 24. These bills represent vast government over-reach and working to dismantle democracy in Nova Scotia.

I do not support Bill 1 and reducing transparency by allowing freedom of information requests to be denied, dismantling communications NS, limiting debate in the legislature, and granting authority for non-unionized government workers to be fired without cause. N.S. information commissioner Tricia Ralph states that "the legislation [in bill 1] could diminish government accountability" and "is calling on the governing party to withdraw legislation that she says weakens the public's right to access government records and documents." (from CBC). This is a significant withdrawal of transparency and accountability and should not go through.

I do not support lifting bans and community consent on uranium mining and fracking in Bill 6. Removing requirements for community consent for fracking is alarming and an irresponsible way to proceed with something that can cause so much harm. Nova Scotia has the densest rural population in Canada. Over 40,000 families and houses depend on well water for drinking. In Saskatchewan, uranium mines are 600 km away from communities and towns. Before you vote on this, I would ask if you are comfortable having a uranium mine or fracking site close to your house and your family? I implore you to vote no to Bill 6. Tim Houston is greenwashing Nova Scotians about the ability to safely mine and frack, and the science backs up the dangers. Studies have found that fracking and uranium mining are linked with contaminated water, lung cancer, respiratory diseases, congenital birth defects, childhood asthma & leukemia, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, higher overall mortality rates and reduced life expectancy. This is completely against the health care platform that the Conservatives ran on and will cost more in health care dollars in the long run. The rights and voices of KMK and the Assembly of NS Mi'kmaq Chiefs need to be heard and consulted on well before any legislative changes are made.

Uranium mining also adds in health risks from radioactive dust and potential water contamination. It is also fiscally irresponsible as the mining and milling waste are a perpetual health hazard (far more toxic than uranium) that will need to be monitored and managed at the public expense for thousands of years with significant and severe water contamination risks.

Jobs that benefits our province and its people are one that are forward looking and green. Climate change has been listed as the greatest global health threat of the 21st century and the forest fires, floods, and storms we have seen in the last decade make it clear we should not be promoting fracking and uranium mining. Retired geologist Dr. Elisabeth Kusters wrote in the Halifax Examiner "Does Nova Scotia have a large uranium reserve? We don't really know, because Nova Scotia has had a ban on uranium exploration for decades. But we do know that our reserve is completely insignificant compared to that of Saskatchewan...Nova Scotia uranium is not now and never will be economic on any scale whatsoever and that's leaving out whether it's desirable to produce uranium or not. "

Retired University professor, Gillian Thomas, in another Halifax Examiner article, "painstakingly debunks all the claims about the benefits of uranium mining that MANS touts in its report, one by one. Among other things, she noted:

- Uranium is not universally agreed to be a "critical mineral," essential for the transition to a clean energy. It is not designated as a critical mineral in Nova Scotia, nor is it in the UK and France, although both depend heavily on nuclear power.
- MANS relies almost entirely on the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to argue that uranium mining is "safe" for both humans and the environment, although the Canadian Nuclear Safety

Commission, officially the regulator, has been shown to have an "institutional bias" in favour of the nuclear industry, something the Canadian Environmental Law Association has frequently condemned.

- MANS ignores numerous peer-reviewed studies showing clear health and environmental risks of uranium mining and contamination, including the 2011 book, 'Uranium Mining in Virginia: Scientific, Technical, Environmental, Human Health and Safety, and Regulatory Aspects of Uranium Mining and Processing in Virginia.'"

Another point raised was If uranium mining is only allowed in arid states in the USA [due to safety concerns and Virginia has had a supreme court upheld ban due to its high rainfall and intense storms], why would Nova Scotia be suitable when it has a higher precipitation rate than Virginia (and much higher than Saskatchewan) and a history of intense storms that are only going to increase in intensity and frequency with climate change?

It does not make sense financially, environmentally or socially to lift these bans. Nova Scotians do not want you to lift these bans. This is backed up by Dr. Steven Emerman, who is a mining expert and also a retired university professor and geophysicist who is world renown. "Emerman told the Halifax Examiner that the ban on uranium mining in Nova Scotia should stay in place, and that among many other things, the high precipitation in the province alone should preclude safe uranium exploration or mining."

I also oppose the ability to override the authority of municipal governments to make decisions about transportation (bill 24) and having government overreach in academic settings that influence research and education (bill 12). Universities need academic independence for excellence and impartiality. It is not okay to control and force change on institutions or government bodies that do not agree with you. This is not democratic.

I also disagree with changes in Bill 11 that allow health providers to charge more to private insurance than MSI pay limits. This is a playbook from Doug Ford. I am worried that instead of strengthening public health care, Tim Houston is working to divert public funds to for-profits private companies. This breaks the system by underfunding it and forces people to seek private care when they don't have any other options and pushes Tim Houston's privatization of health services agenda. Provinces that outsource care have longer wait times, and higher costs. Please direct public money into the public health system.

Tim Houston's conservative government may have a super-majority, but this is not because the majority of the people of Nova Scotia are behind him. Tim Houston broke his own law to call an early election in a mail strike and when the political climate was advantageous. It is the MLAs job to vote in the best interest of the people of Nova Scotia, not special-interest industry associations that have a poor track record in Nova Scotia, or for bills that overstep authority. These changes were not included in the platform of the Conservatives and significant changes should not be passed quickly through an omnibus bill and without listening to the concerns across party lines from Nova Scotians throughout this province.

Sincerely,

Megan Crowley

[REDACTED]