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Sent: March 16, 2025 1:27 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Cc: Danielle Barkhouse
Subject: Comments on Bill 1 Public bills committee

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This government's embrace of aggressive partisan rhetoric as represented by repeated dismissal of a part of the electorate as 'special interests' is on display in these bills. The breadth and depth of the attacks on democratic processes contained in these bills is shocking. Preserving democracy requires an active citizenry — people with a special interest in government transparency and accountability. It requires respectful consideration of work to establish norms and protections (access to information, independence of the auditor general, bans on uranium mining and fracking). It requires a robust educational system that teaches people to question and push boundaries not try to curry political favour. My principal concerns about three bills that will be discussed at the Public Bills Committee tomorrow are detailed below.

Bill 1 An Act Respecting Government Organization and Administration

While I am relieved that the government has apparently dropped its attempt to undermine the power of the Auditor General I would like to see a similar roll back of their attempt to reduce the power and independence of the Privacy and Information Commissioner.

Robust access to information about government activities through Freedom of Information requests is crucial. Bill 1 does not improve access to information but unfortunately gives the heads of government departments the power to decide that requests are 'trivial' or 'vexatious.'

I am also strongly opposed to how this bill intends to extend political control over the provincial civil service. We need civil servants who work on behalf of the public without fear of being fired without cause. Granting the governing party the power to fire non-unionized civil servants without cause erodes their fundamental rights exposing workers to arbitrary and capricious decision-making. This does not improve efficiency it creates an anxious compliant public service.

Do not disband Communications Nova Scotia. Their commitment to non-partisan public information is important. Disbanding Communications Nova Scotia signals the abandonment of non-partisan communications in favour of controlled political messaging.

In sum Bill 1 represents massive anti-democratic overreach and is so lacking in redeeming qualities that I request it be completely withdrawn.

Helga Guderley

(she, her, hers)

