



News Release

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Bill 12 – Egregious Bill Puts University Power in Hands of the Minister

KJIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Nova Scotia faculty are sounding the alarm at the introduction of Bill 12. If passed, this bill will give the Minister of Advanced Education unprecedented power to appoint the majority of members to university Boards, dictate that research align only with government priorities, and provide unchecked authority to force universities into a revitalization process.

“Under the guise of sustainability and accountability, Bill 12 provides the Minister of Advanced Education the power to standardize Board composition” says Scott Stewart, president of the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers. “The danger here, while limiting Boards to no more than 30 members, is that the Minister will have absolute power to appoint up to half of the Board members, which effectively stacks the deck in a manner that may not necessarily consider the best interests of the university.”

Further, the Bill will enable the Minister alone to determine the key research priorities of the province, and then require the Research Nova Scotia Corporation to align their research to those priorities. As an independent, not-for-profit corporation, with the mandate to support, organize and co-ordinate the funding of research in the province, management and control of the corporation lies with a Board of Directors, and a competent advisory committee that provides advice and makes recommendations on research-related matters. “Providing the Minister with the power to single-handedly steer the focus of research or lose funding is narrow minded, and dangerous,” says Stewart. “Capacity building, forest growth, disability management, agri-genomics, and zoonotic infections are just a few recent examples of research projects that may not get funded in the future if the Minister deems our priorities lie elsewhere. Research priorities need to stay safely in the hands of the researchers and scientists who can objectively identify the merits of each project.”

Lastly, Bill 12 will provide the Minister with unchecked authority to force universities into a revitalization process. Failure to comply will result in the Minister withholding operating funds from the university. Currently, this step is voluntary, allowing the university to decide if and when revitalization plan should be engaged. “The threat here is to the right to collective bargaining for all university employees, from the staff who clean the halls, and keep the boilers



running, to those who offer administrative support and faculty who teach the students. Once again, the power to make those vital decisions needs to remain with the university.”

Prior to introducing Bill 12, the Minister, who is also House Leader, introduced a resolution that gives the government the ability to limit the length of time for debate, and to invoke closure, or end a debate with notice, and changed the law amendments committee to the public bills committee, limiting the opportunity for the public to offer feedback and suggestions on proposed legislation. “These changes tie our hands, and prevent constructive dialogue that is helpful in creating strong, fair legislation for post-secondary education and other sectors,” says Stewart. “I encourage everyone with an interest in the PSE sector – from students and parents, to staff, administrators and faculty – to push back on this proposed bill, and make your concerns known to the Minister.”

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Background:

The Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT) represents faculty at the majority of Nova Scotia’s universities. ANSUT’s vision is to provide its member Associations with the strongest possible voice on post-secondary education issues in the province of Nova Scotia, and to advance its mission by engaging the active participation of its members, both individually and institutionally, to achieve that end.