



New Provincial Budget: Damaging for Nova Scotians

NSGEU

# 20-26 THE STAND

SPRING 2015





**President Jessome delivers a binder containing Home Support worker pledges to members of the Opposition on May 6.**

Dear members,

Nova Scotians have just weathered one of the toughest winters in recent memory. In a literal sense, it was a brutal few months for all of us. But for NSGEU members in particular, this winter was emotionally difficult, as well.

Our health care workers have been dragged through the long, drawn out process of hearings for Bill 1, which was overseen by Arbitrator James Dorsey. At that time, they were faced with a great deal of uncertainty, unsure of which union would represent them after our health care system was restructured, whether the provisions of their contract would be respected, and how the restructuring would affect their working lives. I'm very pleased to say that – thanks in large part to the expertise and moral convictions of Mr. Dorsey and the tireless advocacy of our members – the government was soundly beaten into submission and Bill 1 was changed to allow all members to stay with their current unions.

At the same time, many of our civil servants have also been faced with a great deal of uncertainty, as the Liberals readied to table their 2015/2016 budget.

So far, this government has made cuts to our child welfare services, eliminated vacant and management positions within Community Services, replaced staff at several provincial parks with telephones, closed two visitor information centres, completely eliminated the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism (ERDT) and

closed 13 land registry offices and seven satellite courthouses in our rural communities.

We are extremely concerned about the Liberal government's move towards privatization of our public services like tourism services, economic development, land registries, and home support.

On a practical level, privatizing services means that private companies get contracts to provide government programs, and the public loses control over services people depend on. Ethically and morally speaking, allowing a few people to profit from services we rely on weakens our society's principles and core values.

There are countless examples of privatization efforts gone wrong across Canada. Just to name a few: Tolls have gone up 176% since Ontario privatized Highway 407; privatized Nova Scotia Power has twice the power outages of publicly owned NB Power and pays its CEO three times more; 22 people died as the result of contamination at a meat plant following privatization of federal food inspection; a for-profit hospital charged the Alberta health system 31% more than public hospitals, but still managed to go bankrupt, leaving taxpayers with a \$4 million tab; and police are investigating corruption in a public-private partnership hospital deal in Montreal. (You can read more about how privatization has failed the public throughout the country at: <http://bit.ly/1Gm5rOf>)

This government has also made no secret of their plans to freeze wages and come after the public sector's long-service award, as well. Your union is well aware that we will be facing an extremely tough round of bargaining, and knowing that this government is likely going to try and impose a wage freeze and terminate the long-service award moving forward, we are gearing up for battle!

We will need you at our side. Earlier this year, we launched the What Will You Lose campaign ([whatwillyoulose.ca](http://whatwillyoulose.ca)) to help members understand what is at risk. We've run radio and newspaper advertisements and gathered some amazing, heartfelt stories from civil service members about the valuable work they do.

Please continue to stand up and speak out against cuts to our public services, and tell your friends, family and even your neighbours about the value of the work you do!

In solidarity,

Joan Jessome  
President, NSGEU

## THE STAND

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**Home Support workers protest privatization outside Finance Minister Diana Whalen's constituency office on May 6.**

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## CONNECT WITH US!

We want to hear from our members. If you have thoughts on this issue of The Stand, or ongoing union issues, send us your feedback! You can email us at [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca) or connect with us:



## NSGEU TWEETS

### Edie Strachan (@OPSEUSisters)

"@MilesHowe: "We've defeated #bill1. Now it's time for #bill100. " Jason McLean of @NSGEU #nspoli #hfx @JMACL3AN

### NSNDP (@NSNDP)

#Bill100 another attack on collective rights by the McNeil gov nsndp.ca/ns/bill-100 @cfsns @NS\_Labour @CUPE3912 @SEIU2NS @NSGEU

### John McCracken (@BigJMCC)

Let us not forget that @JamieBaillie & @nspc helped ram through #Bill1, which turned out 2 b a violation of the Cdn. Constitution. #nspoli

### Carrie Campbell (@CarrieCampbell\_)

@NSGEU staff from MSVU, Dal, and SMU ready for the Bill 100 rally on Monday. #nspoli #solidarity #WholsNext?

### Dave Wilson (@davewilsonmla)

NDP Vote NO on McNeil budget nsndp.ca/ns/no-to-mcnei... cc: @NSGEU @CUPENovaScotia @NS\_Labour @dalfacultyassoc @StudentsNS @cfsns

### Suzanne MacNeil (@esooze)

Our @NSGEU friends at #nsfilmjobs rally in support of our film industry workers #nspoli #canlab #actra #iatse

### boudreaus (@Boudreausm)

@NSLiberal Minister Glavine will you meet with nurses to discuss our concerns?#nspoli @NSGEU @MacdonaTrish @421karl @jcleve35



# New Provincial Budget:

By Deedee Slye



Civil Service members rally at Whycomomagh Provincial Park in March.



Wherever you live and work in Nova Scotia, this budget is bad news for you. It devalues public sector workers and their services, abandons rural communities, and moves towards privatization. It is a very damaging budget that will take a long time to recover from and is only making things worse for all of us.

This government is using the deficit numbers in the budget to justify the cutting, reorganization, and sell-off of all but what they define as our "core" public services. This is confusing and alarming to most Nova Scotians who value public services and the good jobs that exist in their communities. They did not vote for a government that was going to cut or privatize these services.

Underlying the government's approach to the budget is the idea that the private sector alone powers the economy. They ignore the role the public sector plays in the economy and continue to show little respect for public sector workers and services. As rural citizens know in particular, it is the combination of the private and public sectors, like a twin-engine plane, that keeps our economy moving. The jobs at your local school, hospital, liquor store, home support service, and courthouse keep small businesses going. Once these public sector jobs are gone, businesses close.

To help realign our public services for privatization, our provincial government announced the creation of a new Department of Business which is completely staffed with

excluded or non-union positions and whose mandate it is to create a business-friendly environment. This follows the pre-budget announcement of the privatization of the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency and their intention to soon privatize three registries in Service Nova Scotia.

In fact, the government has already met with four firms who pitched the government on administering property and operating motor vehicle and business registry services. They include Information Services Corporation from Saskatchewan, a British company called Serco Group, and Teranet, a company that operates in Manitoba and Ontario. None are Nova Scotian and all stand to make a substantial profit from operating our public service. If government revenue is important, which it clearly is, why would we sell off a service that is profitable?

The budget includes the loss of 320 full-time positions in the Civil Service, with many public services downsized or eliminated outright including 58 cuts to Provincial Parks and Visitor Information Centre staff announced in February. It also includes 11 cuts to Community Services staff working in Child Welfare announced in January.

In an ironic and mean-spirited twist, government announced the closure of the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism in the budget – the very department that created the business opportunities on which they are basing their long-term economic growth projections, such as Ships Start Here. The government handled this closure in a brutal way, eliminating 41

# Damaging for Nova Scotia



NSGEU member outside the Legislature in March, protesting cuts to Civil Service.

unionized positions, and many non-union positions, on the spot. Our members were called into a meeting at approximately the same time the budget was being tabled, handed lay-off notices, and escorted from their workplaces with boxes of their valuables.

Almost every department will have smaller numbers of employees working for them. For example, a Crown Disclosure position is being eliminated in the HRM. The Department of Finance's Community Counts program has been eliminated. Film and Creative NS was shattered leaving the film industry without this critical resource. Two positions were eliminated in the Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy has lost a Program Administration Officer position. Government also eliminated 42 positions from Community Services that were vacant and waiting to be filled.

According to Statistics Canada, approximately 43 per cent of Nova Scotians live in rural areas. These rural communities rely on public sector jobs and services. Even so, in addition to the loss of the seasonal positions in parks and tourism, the budget included the shutting down of 13 Land Registry Offices - leaving only the Amherst,



NSGEU members who work in parks and Visitor Information Centres rally outside the Legislature on March 26.

Sydney, Dartmouth, Bridgewater, and Lawrencetown offices open. Twenty members working in Land Registry have the choice to move with their jobs to a remaining office, or take lay-off notices. The government also announced they are closing seven rural courthouses in Port Hood, Guysborough, Baddeck, Lunenburg, Liverpool, Comeauville, and Barrington. There were no members laid off with these closures, but many Nova Scotians will be losing a valuable public service in their community.

NSGEU Employee Relations Officers are working with all affected members to ensure their

rights contained in the Civil Service master agreement are being protected. Fortunately, we have negotiated job security language that will allow many, hopefully all, of those who were laid-off to find other suitable positions within the Civil Service.

The budget included a paltry increase of less than one per cent for the Department of Health and Wellness - the smallest increase in more than a decade. Although the Minister of Health & Wellness and the Premier have talked about the need for a more robust home-care plan, they only budgeted for a scant \$3.8 million increase. Mental

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# Provincial Budget damaging for Nova Scotians

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health, a growing area of concern for Nova Scotians unable to access timely care, was given an increase of just \$1 million.

It is clear from this budget that government doesn't value the public sector, as it includes less money for wage increases in the future. They can't seem to see the relationship between wage increases and economic activity. They see them as purely an expense. This is made clear in their attack on fair wage settlements. They blame the three-year wage pattern of 2, 2.5, and 3 per cent increases in the last round of bargaining as the reason for the deficit, but don't acknowledge the revenue they generate. What about the other side of the ledger, where modest wage increases allow people to keep pace with increases in food and energy costs? These wages circulate in communities and support local businesses. They also come back to the government through taxes.

While the Liberals have attacked the last three years of modest wage increases, (ignoring the two years of one per cent increases that preceded them), they had no problem raising user fees for government services by three per cent. Finance Minister Diana Whalen called the move a "standard increase," one that is reflective of cost-of-living increases and a common practice. She was quoted saying, "This is something that, in fact, should be done every year, just to keep pace with the cost of living." Why is this practice standard when it comes to fees, but considered outrageous when it comes to the salaries of the people who deliver the services?

Nova Scotians didn't elect a government to cut jobs and privatize services. The Liberals did not let people know they had this agenda before they were elected. Just like they did not tell Nova Scotians they were going to dictate their own vision of health care labour representation. They actually said the opposite – they were going to respect labour rights. Premier McNeil was caught on tape prior to his election saying they were going to strengthen Nova Scotia's position in the film industry and then chopped Film and Creative NS, along with the Nova Scotia film tax credit. We hear from members every day who tell us they had no idea the Liberals were going to govern like this.



Thousands gathered at Province House in April to protest government cuts to the Film Tax Credit.



President Jessome takes part in the Film Tax Credit rally at Province House in April.

They have done a great deal of damage to public services, public sector workers, and communities in Nova Scotia with this budget. They have also taken a big step forward with their agenda to privatize services. Although they have a majority government at this time, they will face the voters again by 2017. We must raise our voices high! Let the government know this is not what you voted for. Please visit [whatwillyoulose.ca](http://whatwillyoulose.ca) and spread the word. Together, we can make a difference. ■

Please stand with the parks and Visitor Information Centre staff! Support public services and good jobs in your communities. Tell the Premier less means less and you want to save our services! [whatwillyoulose.ca](http://whatwillyoulose.ca)

# Rural jobs matter! Public Service cuts are bad for everyone

By Deedee Slye

The Liberal government has been rolling out the cuts to public services and jobs in rural communities for the past few months. It began in January with cuts to 11 positions in Child Welfare services in Barrington and Guysborough, and was quickly followed on February 27 with the announcement that government was cutting 58 staff at seven provincial parks (turning them into self-serve parks) and closing two Visitor Information Centres (VICs) in Digby and Pictou. These cuts, which hurt workers and their families in rural communities across the province, will save them a meager \$600,000. To put this in perspective, government has poured \$29 million into the Yarmouth Ferry last year, and another \$13 million so far this year. This includes \$2.5 million to berth the ferry in South Carolina. They have also spent \$1,800,000 on a park reservation system that employs people in Ontario. Where is their investment in Nova Scotia?

Burton MacIntyre has spent 74 years in Whycomomagh and knows his community well. He made the trip to Halifax to the rally on March 26 at the Nova Scotia Legislature to support the women and men who work at provincial parks and VICs who were given lay-off notices.

He says the people who work in his local provincial park are awesome people. He's all smiles, but underneath, there is real concern for the future of his community: "It's so unfortunate because the Ivany report says we should do things to support rural communities and Cape Breton. That is not happening when you take seven jobs out of here."

The day of the rally, Ben's Bread had just closed in HRM and announced over 100 jobs were being lost.

MacIntyre was quick to make a connection, "The loss of these seven jobs in Whycomomagh are as significant as the loss of over 100 jobs at Bens Bread here in Halifax. When you lose people, you lose coaches, you lose volunteers and it really impacts on a small community." He also points out that the government loses the tax revenue, as well: "It's a lose-lose situation."

At the rally, NSGEU President Joan Jessome, told CBC reporter Paul Withers, "We have serious concerns about the direct impact to the people who are providing the service, but also to the viability of the park when they reduce the staff by 65 per cent. To say that a kiosk provides comparable service is an injustice to the value of the work park staff do."

Melissa Lake has worked as a receptionist at Whycomomagh Park for 18 seasons and has taken great pride in the service she has provided to campers over the years.

"Basically, what we do on the front line is provide anything campers need to enhance or improve their camping experience."

Lake can't believe government made the decision to replace her with a telephone and doubts that they will actually be cheaper. Melissa only earns approximately \$15,000 per season. She says this is an example of "a short term gain that will end up causing a long term loss with a very small amount of savings that could have been achieved in a number of other ways." Lake suggests Nova Scotians should have the jobs of taking reservations for people visiting Nova Scotia's parks.



Civil Service members rally at the Canso Causeway in March.

Bob Gimblett managed to hang onto his job at Porters Lake Provincial Park, although two-thirds of his coworkers have been laid off. He was profoundly disappointed and shook his head in wonder, when he talked about the cuts to staff: "They want to promote tourism? But here they cut the people on the front lines who were really working for tourism? These parks staff promoted the parks and the area to visitors and now they are let go."

Laid-off staff at the rally said that up until two years ago, the Nova Scotia VICs were the envy of other provinces. The Digby ferry to

New Brunswick runs two times a day in the summer. Government's decision to close the Digby VIC means the two bilingual staff members will not be available to meet and greet visitors who are looking for things to do in Nova Scotia when they get off the ferry.

"Every year we learned new things and increased our knowledge base of what to do in the area," said one of the laid-off staff members. "This is a bad day for tourism in the province."

Natural Resources Minister Zach Churchill's defense of the cuts is that provincial parks cost \$3 million more than they bring in. At the same time, Provincial Parks are prohibited from competing with the private sector. How can parks be criticized for not making a profit, but not allowed to compete with the private sector?

This seems like an impossible double standard. Provincial Parks have always been a public service not a for-profit making enterprise. They should be improved, promoted and serviced, not cut and left to deteriorate until they can be sold off to the highest bidder. ■



# Remembering Wayne 1953-2015



Members & staff sign a guest book and show solidarity for Wayne at NSGEU headquarters in March.

In March, the NSGEU lost a long-time staff member, friend and Brother: Wayne Butler.

Wayne was a member of Local 2, working as a Maintenance Worker with the Department of Tourism and Culture at the Museum of Industry in Stellarton, before he joined the staff of the NSGEU as a General Assistant in 2007.

Just three days before Wayne passed away, his coworkers and friends had the opportunity to honour him at a living memorial held at the NSGEU office in Burnside. Many people who knew him from all walks of life were in attendance at the event, where they shared funny stories and fond memories with Wayne and his family members. It was a beautiful way to honour a friend.

## BUTLER, WAYNE LEVERNE

Age 62 of Green Hill, Pictou Co., passed away on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, in the Aberdeen Hospital, New Glasgow with his family at his side.

Born in Berwick, he was a son of the late Douglas and Blanche (Boudreau) Butler. A loving and caring father, Wayne will be dearly missed by his daughter, Dawnita and son, Christopher; sisters, Lynn Pignatelli (Paolo) and Pat Butler; brothers, Loran (Judy) and Jim Butler; former wife and friend, Lori Hill - Best (Allan) along with several

nieces and nephews.

Wayne was a proud and dedicated employee of NSGEU for many years where he passionately shared his beliefs while remaining true to himself. During his time there, and in his previous career as a motion picture projectionist, Wayne impacted his co-workers with his humour, dedication and his desire to "get things done."



Joan pays tribute to Wayne during his Living Memorial.

Wayne's long lasting cherished friendships saw him through his final days. In his private life, Wayne's diverse interests included backgammon, antique cars and a stellar collection of vinyl. These passions were as unique in character, as the personalities and friends that he shared them with, from British Columbia to Ontario to Nova Scotia.

His greatest attribute was his love for his children, Dawnita and Christopher. They represented all of the things that any parent would wish for, as they were his greatest joy.

Wayne will be sorely missed by family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances alike. Cremation has taken place. A family service will be held in Argyle Head at a later date. Donations in Wayne's memory may be made to Aberdeen Palliative Care Society, New Glasgow, NS. Arrangements are under the direction of Eagles Funeral Home. [eaglesfuneralhome.ca](http://eaglesfuneralhome.ca) ■

# Bill 1 is Done!

## How NSGEU led the charge against the Liberal attack on healthcare workers- and won

By Holly Fraughton

Seven months ago, the most undemocratic legislation Nova Scotia has ever seen – Bill 1 (also known as the Health Authorities Act) – was tabled in the Legislature by the Liberal government. This unprecedented piece of legislation would impose union representation and a first contract on all 24,000 health care workers in Nova Scotia, and even went so far as to give the employer the right to help select the union that will represent its employees.

While the Liberals insisted Bill 1 was simply designed to "streamline" the bargaining process, it was actually designed to weaken the NSGEU: the legislation was clearly written in a way that government thought would ensure 9,000 members would be forced from the NSGEU.

"Bill 1 was a blatant attack on our members: the government was assigning workers to the unions of their choosing, without taking workers' wishes into consideration at all," said NSGEU President Joan Jessome.

"It was a clear infringement on their Charter rights and the fundamental nature of employee independent choice. We simply couldn't stand by and allow workers' rights to be trampled by politicians who had an axe to grind with us."

In the fall, Jessome led the charge of enraged members and trade unionists to the Legislature, where they rallied for five days as the rookie Liberal government frantically pushed the legislation through the House of Assembly. And push it through they did.

But this fight was far from over.

For the coming months, NSGEU members and activists tirelessly protested outside MLA offices and businesses, railing against the legislation and calling for a vote. That message was echoed in newspaper, billboard and radio ads throughout the province, and by President Jessome during countless media interviews and meetings with members.

Behind the scenes, NSGEU leadership and lawyers were preparing to enter into the mediation/arbitration process outlined in Bill 1. That process would be overseen by James Dorsey, a respected

and highly sought-after arbitrator with more than three decades of experience.

After days of mediation dates, two lengthy arbitration hearings, and many sleepless nights for Nova Scotia's health care workers, Mr. Dorsey delivered his decision: he would respect workers' rights and not simply assign workers to the four unions as the government prescribed in Bill 1. Instead, he ruled that NSGEU would represent all Health Care and Administrative Professional workers in the province.



President Jessome speaks to members about health care restructuring during an emergency meeting in January.

"The moment I read Mr. Dorsey's final decision and realized that he had seen through the government's thinly veiled attack on us, I felt such a sense of relief: not just for us as a union, but for our current members, and really, for all workers in this province," Jessome recalled.

"Mr. Dorsey sent a very clear message to Mr. McNeil: this type of meddling in labour relations will simply not stand."

Of course, government officials were less than pleased with Mr.

Dorsey's decision. The Minister of Health and Wellness, Leo Glavine, attempted to fire Mr. Dorsey no fewer than four times before reluctantly coming to the realization that he had no authority to do so.

Now faced with the very real prospect that the NSGEU may emerge from the Bill 1 debacle bruised but unbroken, and as strong as ever, the government began their long climb down from grace. Within days, the unions were approached with an offer from the Liberals and on March 13, an agreement was reached to form a Council of Unions for the purposes of negotiating collective agreements for healthcare workers. Moreover, it meant the NSGEU would not lose a single member.

The Health Council agreement is virtually identical to the bargaining association proposal brought forward last summer by the NSGEU and the three other unions (CUPE, Unifor and NSNU) representing health care workers. The government had refused the proposal at that time, and instead went ahead with implementing the Health Authorities Act.

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# Health Council FAQ

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Now, instead of trying to take members from their unions, the government will allow all health care workers to stay with their respective unions, and the unions will bargain four collective agreements – one each for the Health Care, Nursing, Administrative Professional and Support Services bargaining units – together.

“This is a better outcome than I ever could have imagined, especially when you consider what the government was trying to accomplish with Bill 1,” said Jessome.

“With Health Councils, the NSGEU will continue to represent each and every one of its members, and will have a significant voice at all bargaining tables. And we’ll be fighting harder than ever to ensure the rights and benefits we have negotiated over the years are not only protected, but improved.”

**Q. So how exactly will Health Councils work?**



**ABOVE:** Members attend an emergency health care meeting at NSGEU office in January.

**BELOW:** NSGEU Lawyer Ray Larkin answers questions from health care workers at the meeting.



The four unions sat down and worked out a constitution that would set ground rules for how the Councils would operate. There are four Councils: one for Health Care, Nursing, Administrative Professionals and Support Services.

They will operate in the same way with the same constitutions. Each Council has two main purposes:

They negotiate contracts for each of the four bargaining units at both the IWK and the newly established Provincial Health Authority;

They will negotiate the essential services agreements required before any future job action or strike can take place.

It is important to note that each union will continue to represent their current membership as they do now for every other aspect of labour relations including the filing of grievances, college complaints, and pension and benefit discussions that take place outside of bargaining.

You can read the full constitutions for each bargaining unit here.

**Q. How will bargaining work?**

There will be four collective agreements for health care workers across the province and at the IWK; one each for Administrative Professionals, Support Services, Nursing and Healthcare. The Council will negotiate each of these agreements.

**Q. How will we determine who is on the bargaining**

**committees?**

Each union will appoint negotiators for the four sectors as follows:

- Nursing Bargaining – NSNU will appoint the chief negotiator, NSGEU will appoint the deputy chief negotiator;
- Healthcare Bargaining – NSGEU will appoint the chief negotiator, CUPE will appoint the deputy chief negotiator;
- Administrative Professionals Bargaining – CUPE will appoint the chief negotiator, NSGEU will appoint the deputy chief negotiator;
- Support Services Bargaining – Unifor will appoint the chief negotiator, NSGEU will appoint the deputy chief negotiator.

The two unions with the largest membership in each sector will appoint a chair of the bargaining committee. That means NSGEU will have bargaining co-chairs in all four bargaining units.

Finally, and very importantly, the number of members on each bargaining committee will be proportional to the number of members each union has in each of the four bargaining units.

NSGEU will have the most members on the Administrative Professionals, Support Services and Healthcare bargaining committees and the second most members on the Nursing bargaining committee. The bargaining committees are elected from the local.

**Q. I’m a health care worker. Does this mean I will lose some of my current rights**

**& benefits, because the new “lead” union may favour their own contract language?**

Arbitrator Dorsey’s order that all existing collective agreements be stapled together and then taken into bargaining means that all current benefits will continue until negotiations are complete. The NSGEU will play a strong role at each bargaining table, and will continue to bargain hard to ensure all workers maintain the best possible contract language.

**Q. I know that health care workers in different parts of the province have different health benefit plans. What will happen to my health benefits?**

As of April 1st, you will be covered under the same health benefits plan. We expect health benefits are something that may be brought to the bargaining table by the employer as something to be negotiated in your next collective agreement. The NSGEU will have a strong presence at every table and will stand up to maintain our current benefits.

**Q. Will the groups that were to be moved out of Health Care (to Support Services or Administrative Professionals) still be moved? If so, which union will represent them?**

Yes. During the arbitration process, the NSGEU argued that all positions should remain where they were. Unfortunately, the arbitrator and employer did not agree, and some positions are being moved into the Support Services and Administrative Professional groupings as of April 1st, 2015. If you are unsure about which bargaining unit you now

fall within, please call the NSGEU at 902-424-4063 (toll-free 1-877-556-7438).

However, if you are currently an NSGEU member, you will remain an NSGEU member, no matter what sector you fall under.

**Q. I’ve been moved out of Health Care and into Support Services. Which contract will I be covered by?**

All workers will be covered by their current collective agreement until a new contract can be negotiated for your bargaining unit.

So, if you are a Unit Aide who has been moved to the Support Services, for example, your current contract provisions remain in place until a new contract is negotiated for the Support Services Bargaining Unit. Given that the government also passed a law requiring complex essential services negotiations, it is unlikely negotiations will begin until later this year.

**Q. How will seniority work?**

There will be one province-wide seniority list for the entire Provincial Health Authority and one for the IWK. Current lists will be merged with all unions by bargaining unit.

**Q. What happens if I want to apply for another job at a different facility that is covered by another union’s contract?**

Beginning April 1st, 2015 and until new collective agreements are negotiated in each bargaining unit, if a member from any union were to apply for a job at a facility that falls under another union’s geographic region tomorrow, that

person can’t use their seniority to get the position. But if they are the successful applicant, their seniority will go with them.

However, if you were to successfully apply for a new job in the future, after new contracts are negotiated for each bargaining unit, you will be able to apply for a job at any facility in the new provincial health authority and your seniority will carry with you. The IWK will have a separate seniority list.

**Q. I work at Capital Health, but I also pick up casual shifts at a facility in another district health authority. Will I still be able to pick up shifts after April 1st? Since all facilities (except the IWK) will then be one employer, does this mean I’ll be paid overtime?**

We are encouraging all members who pick up casual shifts at another facility or in another classification to carry on as usual. The unions will discuss this matter with the new provincial health authority as soon as possible.

**Q. What will happen with the Licensed Practical Nurses’ reclassification efforts?**

Our efforts for the LPN reclassification are still ongoing, and we plan to pursue them under the Health Council structure. Since the grievance and classification review started under the current contract, this process can proceed. We expect the other unions will be keen for us to continue this work, as well, as all LPNs in the province will benefit if we are successful.

**Q. What about ongoing grievances?**

Those will also carry on, undisturbed. However, all the unions must discuss forwarding grievances which are going to arbitration if the matter affects the rights of the other unions.

**Q. Right now, there are a few slight wage discrepancies between the same classifications in different district health authorities. How will this be dealt with?**

As of April 1st, all wages and provisions of your current contract will stay in place until a new contract is negotiated. Any wage discrepancies will be addressed at the bargaining table. It has always been the NSGEU’s goal to “level up” during bargaining in these types of situations.

**Q. Which union will I call if I have an issue at work, and need to file a grievance, etc...?**

If you currently belong to the NSGEU, you will call us! The key component to the Health Council structure is that all members get to stay with their current union. ■

# PSSP Five-Year Review in 2015

By Corinne Carey

In recent years, there have been a number of major changes made to the Public Service Superannuation Plan (PSSP) in 2010 and 2012 in response to serious concerns about the long-term financial health of the Plan. These changes deal with adjusting the Plan's benefits in line with the cost of living (better known as indexation), introducing some different benefits for new employees, opening up the overall administration to joint trusteeship, and a five-year funding review.

The changes in 2010 resulted in the Plan having guaranteed cost of living increases of 1.25% payable each January 1 from 2011 to 2015. This also meant that new employees hired on or after April 6, 2010 moved to the Rule of 85 from the Rule of 80 for unreduced pension benefits and survivor benefits reduced to 60% from 66 2/3% after the initial five-year 100% guaranteed period.

The 2012 changes created a new funding policy and governance structure for the Plan. The Public Service Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc. (PSSPTI) (including representation from NSGEU (3 reps), CUPE Highway Workers (1 rep), 1 retiree rep, and one non-bargaining unit staff rep) was created to oversee the overall operations and management of the Nova Scotia Pension Services Corporations (formerly the Nova Scotia Pension Agency). These changes all took effect on April 1, 2013.

Beginning in 2015, the Board of Directors of the PSSPTI will be evaluating the funded health of the Plan. This is the first time that the Board of Directors will be utilizing the funding policy

to determine what actions are available to them based on the projected funded status of the plan.

The following is a summary of the Funding Policy which requires different actions depending on the projected funding level of the Plan for the next five years. If the funding level is projected to be under 100%, there will be no indexation, possible contribution rate increases, and/or benefit changes (going forward). If above 100%, there may be indexation, reserve funding, contribution rate reductions, and/or benefit improvements.

The Plan has been doing very well in the last few years. The 2013-2014 Annual Report has the Plan's funded ratio at 98.6 per cent on smoothed basis (that is, over the last five years) as of March 31, 2014. But, on a market value basis, the funded level was higher at 104.4% as of March 31, 2014.

The decisions made by the Board of Directors for the next 5-year period have to be made by the middle of 2015. Their decisions will affect active plan members and retirees alike. ■



Corinne Carey is the NSGEU Pensions & Benefits Officer.

## PSSP Pension Chart

	Funded Ratio	Indexing for next 5 years	Actions required to meet or exceed funding target
Under Funded	Below 100% but at or above 96%	None	May increase contribution rates.
	Below 96% but at least or above 90%	None	1. Must increase contribution rates. 2. reduce benefits if necessary.
	Below 90%	None	1. Must increase contribution rates. 2. Reduce benefits if necessary.
	At least 100% but below 120%	Permitted not to exceed 50% of CPI	Add to funding reserve.
	At least 110% but below 120%	Permitted not to exceed CPI	1. At least 50% of surplus is set aside as funding reserve. 2. Contribution rates may be reduced and/or benefits enhanced after providing for: a. reserve and b. indexing.
	At least 120%	Mandated, not to exceed CPI	1. 50% of surplus above 120% is used for indexing. 2. 50% of surplus above 120% is used for reduced contribution rates. 3. At least 50% of surplus between 100% and 120% for reserve. 4. At least 50% of balance of surplus between 100% and 120% for indexing. 5. Balance of surplus between 100% and 120% used to reduce contribution rates.



The labour movement's **"TIME FOR CHANGE TOUR"** is coming to a community near you.

**Delta Halifax**  
Baronet Ballroom  
1990 Barrington Street, Halifax NS

Wednesday, May 13  
7:00 p.m.



## Sign up to get involved in labour's campaign for a better Canada

Do you want to help work for a better, more secure future for all Canadians? Sign up to help the Canadian Labour Congress win a new government in the next federal election.

We believe we can win a new government that is committed to working with us to build the Canada we all want. That Canada is not one where nearly one million Canadians have to work more than one job to make ends meet. It's not a country where 12 per cent of seniors who have worked their whole lives to build this country live in poverty. And it's not a country where three quarters of all the jobs created are precarious, temporary and part-time.

There are ways to create quality jobs – jobs where workers make enough to support their families, get the respect they deserve and have long term security so they can feel positive about the future. We need a government that will create jobs by investing in our public health care system. That's how we can ensure that despite our aging population, Canadians will be able to access the care they need when they need it.

We need a government that helps parents – especially women – get to work by investing in child care. And we need a government that will commit to expanding the Canada Pension Plan, because no one should have to retire in poverty after a lifetime of hard work.

By working together, we can elect a government that puts jobs, health care, child care and seniors first.

Sign up at [CanadianLabour.ca](http://CanadianLabour.ca) to get involved in labour's campaign for a better Canada. ■



## Momentum Growing with Saint Mary's & NSGEU SEEN Project

The SEEN (or Silver Economy Engagement Network) started in September 2013 when NSGEU and Saint Mary's University Continuing Education signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding to begin the process of planning and delivering a SEEN pilot project to NSGEU members and retired members. This followed a year or so of discussions to explore the concept and develop this agreement.

In early December 2014, Saint Mary's University Continuing Education hired a Rural Coordinator (Dayle Eshelby) to work with NSGEU on getting the SEEN project underway. One of Eshelby's initial tasks was to present to and spend a morning with NSGEU members at the March 21 Pre-retirement Seminar. She is looking forward to the upcoming Pre-retirement Seminars around the province.

SEEN wants to empower its members to make a meaningful contribution to society. SEEN will provide a network of shared educational, economic and cultural linkages and opportunities for Nova Scotians who are retired or contemplating retirement. The goals are to create a membership network of Nova Scotians who are seeking community engagement and or new learning opportunities: interested in sharing their experience and skills and being linked with individuals and organizations who will benefit from their skills and expertise as a volunteer or paid employee.

The Halifax Area SEEN team (anyone retired or considering retirement) held an information-packed day for the Halifax SEEN Kick-off Event on May 1, Rural communities can then use the Halifax Event as a template or create what fits the needs of their

group or region. Meetings have been lined-up for early May with Municipal Councilors from the Cape Breton Region. It will be exciting to get together with the NSGEU Regional Council there to move on what comes out of those discussions forward and see what other partnerships develop.

There were four very productive days representing SEEN at the Up!Skilling Festival in Cornwallis and at the Local Prosperity Conference in Annapolis Royal on April 9-11. Great contacts and conversations created numerous leads. These leads will be followed up when SEEN and the South Shore NSGEU Representatives meet to move the SEEN goals forward. These goals will be achieved by building a membership network, developing a members' skills and expertise resource base, partnering with like-minded organizations to develop links and complimentary activities and by identifying and researching SEEN members' interests.

We plan to use the Halifax event on May 1 as a template for experiences in Cape Breton, the South Shore and the Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough region. We are making progress and we can't wait to have you involved! ■

For more information, please contact: [Dayle.Eshelby@smu.ca](mailto:Dayle.Eshelby@smu.ca)



Members of SEEN at NSGEU offices in 2014.



Members of Solidariglee, the Labour Choir, take part in a Labour day celebration in September 2014 in Halifax.

## Solidariglee Forever

Solidariglee is a part of the Cultural program of the Halifax-Dartmouth and District Labour Council. They are small singing group, that uses singing and chanting to fight social and economic injustice. Everyone who supports the goals of the small choir and wants to raise their voice for justice is welcome to attend rehearsals and sing along at events. Members perform and sing in harmony but try to choose songs that people can sing along to, and invite them to sing along at protests, pickets lines, rallies and conventions.

They choose songs from the folk music tradition along with writing new lyrics to contemporary and traditional melodies, and also have some new songs written by Mike Chandler. Members do not have to be union members but do have to be union positive. Solidariglee was established in 2011 and has been growing strong since, in a variety of sizes and iterations. They have been used as news backdrops for a number of struggles including the Halifax Transit strike where the street theatre and new words to "Wheels on the Bus" were frequently used as an additional sound and picture, to the story in the news. The group also has recorded videos, including one that was made to support the union drive for coffee shop workers (can be found on youtube.com called Hey Baristas!)

Members of the NSGEU currently make up a significant number of choir members, and Solidariglee would be thrilled if more folks in Halifax-Dartmouth wanted to get involved. Mike Chandler of Local 7 is the musical director. He is also a member of ACTRA and has appeared in many theatre productions in Halifax. Margaret Anne McHugh, NSGEU Education Officer, who co-ordinates Solidariglee says: "We are looking for people who are willing to raise their voice for justice. You don't have to be a fabulous singer but you can't be tone deaf either!"

Solidariglee will perform or lead singing at the Halifax May Day rally on May 1 in Grand Parade, and the Great Big Sing Along at the Company House on May 3 from 1-3:30 p.m. They rehearse weekly but only ask that members commit to two rehearsals a month. To become involved, get more info, find the rehearsal time and place, or join them to check out a rehearsal, you can contact Margaret Anne at the NSGEU. ■





President Joan Jessome delivers Home Support member pledges to Health Minister Leo Glavine at Province House on May 6, the Home Support day of action.



University workers protest Bill 100 outside Province House in April.



1st Vice President Jason MacLean speaks at the Bill 100 protest.



Members of the NSGEU OH&S Committee at the Day of Mourning Ceremony at Province House on April 28.



Members ask questions during a local 31 meeting about potential privatization of Home Support workers.



NSGEU laid a wreath at the Day of Mourning ceremony.



ABOVE: A home support client rallies with workers outside Diana Whalen's constituency office on May 6, for the day of action.



BELOW: Home Support workers from NSGEU and CUPE as well as Home Nurses from NSNU took part in the province wide rallies.



RIGHT: University faculty and NSGEU workers protest Bill 100 at Province House in April.





Director of Admin. Bruce Thomson says a few words about Secretary Linda Keizer (pictured right) during her retirement party in April.



NSGEU ERO Bill McKiggan speaks to colleagues during his retirement celebration in April.



NSGEU's Home Support Council held a meeting about potential government privatization in March.



Members celebrate NSGEU day on April 18 with a cake and festivities!



The Working Toward Bully Free Workplaces Program committee poses for a photo at NSGEU offices in April.

## UNION THREADS

There's a whole range of colourful NSGEU clothing available at the union office at 255 John Savage Avenue. For more info, call Jackie Creemer at 424-4063 (toll free at 1-877-556-7438) or email [jcreemer@nsgeu.ca](mailto:jcreemer@nsgeu.ca)



\$20.00



\$15.00



\$60.00



\$25.00



\$3.00



\$10.00

Our NSGEU sweaters & jackets would make a great addition to your fall wardrobe!

## NSGEU EDUCATION COURSES MAY to JUNE 2015

### New Activist

May 5 & 6  
NSGEU Office, Sydney  
Cape Breton and  
Pictou/Antigonish/  
Guysborough Region

May 25 & 26 Old  
Orchard Inn, Wolfville  
South Shore & Valley  
Region

Eligibility: Members  
with no prior training.  
Recommended for  
New Stewards prior to  
Steward 1.

Description:  
Introduction to the  
NSGEU and the labour  
movement. Review of  
workers rights, union  
processes, grievances,  
mobilization and the  
importance of strong  
locals.

### Pre-Retirement

May 9  
Dalhousie Agricultural  
College, Cox 24

Eligibility: Usually  
within one to two  
years of retirement.

Description: Overview  
of pension politics  
in Nova Scotia.  
Presentation from CPP  
and your pension plan,  
i.e. NSAHO, PSSP, etc.  
Retirement benefits.  
Benefit information  
varies according to  
location and Local  
members.

### Steward I

May 7 & 8  
NSGEU Office, Sydney  
Cape Breton/  
Pictou/Antigonish/  
Guysborough

June 4 & 5  
Old Orchard Inn,  
Wolfville  
South Shore & Valley  
Region

Eligibility: Stewards  
with no prior training.

Description:  
Introduction to roles  
and responsibilities of  
Steward. Introduction  
to grievance procedure  
and investigation.

### Steward II

May 29 & 30  
NSGEU Office, Sydney  
Cape Breton/  
Pictou/Antigonish/  
Guysborough Region

Eligibility: Stewards  
with six months  
experience at Level 1.

Description:  
In-depth grievance  
investigation. tools  
for dealing with  
management.  
Expanded roles and  
responsibilities of the  
Steward.

If you're interested in participating in any of the courses or workshops listed here, the NSGEU can help make it happen! We cover your transportation and child/eldercare costs (as defined by the NSGEU Board policies) and will also help arrange for your time off work. For more information contact us by calling 424-4063 (toll-free 1-877-556-7438) or emailing [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca).



# The Liberal Budget means cuts to services, jobs, communities

“Some  
people  
will try to  
tell you less  
is more...  
but really it  
just means  
less.”

## THE 2015/2016 BUDGET:

- Cuts child welfare services that support children and families
- Closes Visitor Information Centres that support jobs in local tourism
- Closes seven courthouses and 13 land registry offices in rural Nova Scotia
- Replaces staff with machines at seven provincial parks
- Cuts 320 full-time public sector jobs in communities around the province
- Makes it even harder for young people to afford a university education – by removing the cap on tuition fees
- Makes health care waits longer as funding fails to keep up with inflation and growing demand as the population ages
- Fails seniors – with completely inadequate funding for home care while wait lists have risen 80%

Tell Premier McNeil our communities  
aren't worth less: [premier@novascotia.ca](mailto:premier@novascotia.ca)

**NSGEU**



**NSGEU**

Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union  
255 John Savage Avenue, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3B 0J3  
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