

November 1, 2021

Members of the Nova Scotia Public Accounts Committee

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Re: Island Employment

I am writing today as President of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union and as a concerned Nova Scotian to propose that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts add the operations of Island Employment and government oversight on how third parties utilize government funds to their agenda. Specifically, administrative defects, including conflicts of interest, uncontrolled spending practices and lack of adherence to government procurement standards, indulgent spending activities related to food, promotional goods, and gifts, and inconsistent and inappropriate practices related to travel claims, outlined in an investigation by the Office of the Nova Scotia Ombudsman. The investigation also flagged weakness in how the Department of Labour and Advanced Education governed third-party agencies spending public money.

The issue at hand arises from a Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act disclosure complaint to the Nova Scotia Ombudsman, filed by members. The disclosure involved numerous allegations to Ombudsman Representatives, mostly related to how Island Employment was spending program funds.

A detailed summary of the complaints can be found on in the 2020-21 Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman Annual Report:
https://ombudsman.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/annual_reports/OmbudsAR-2020-2021.pdf .

The case study outlines how the Office of the Ombudsman investigated the allegations under the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrong Act (PIDWA), Nova Scotia's "whistleblower" legislation. The PIDWA is designed to encourage public servants and others to expose perceived wrongdoing in the public service and to protect whistleblowers against reprisals.

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The NSGEU is requesting that the Public Accounts Committee review the Ombudsman Report and to conduct an audit of Island Employment operations as well as departmental oversight of how third parties use government funds.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JM', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jason MacLean
President

JML/lb