

Students Nova Scotia	Board of Directors	students 
	<i>Meeting Minutes</i>	

Meeting Name:	Board Meeting		
Meeting Date:	Jan. 9, 2013		
Meeting Time:	9:00 AM, AST		
Venue:	The Hub Halifax	City:	Halifax, NS
Attendees			
Primary and Secondary Delegates:	Amy Brierley (Chair/StFXSU), Benjamin Gunn-Doerge (StFXSU), Jeremy Mott (Kingstec NSCCSA), Darcy Shea (ASU), Gorba Bhandari (SMUSA), Paul Rukidi (SMUSA) , Aaron Beale (DSU), Matthew Rios (Vice Chair/ASU)		
Other attendees:	Jonathan Williams (Executive Director), Brian Foster (Director of Engagement and Communications), Allison Sparling (Campaigns Coordinator), Danielle Andres (Research Officer).		
Absent:	ASTSU, Brennan Boudreau (CBUSU, regrets), Jessica Compagnon (DASA), Patrick Visintini (Dags), Matthew Latimer (CBUSU/Treasurer), Sagar Jha (DSU)		
Quorum (50% of Members represented?): YES			

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Roll Call
- 3) Approval of agenda

Agenda **approved by general consent**

4) Approval of December 20 minutes

Minutes **approved by general consent**

DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

5) 2014 Pre-budget submission discussion and approval of items

JW (ED): Generally speaking we need to identify our spending priorities for next year and then we will communicate those to the Finance Minister. Last year we had three asks and that seems like a good number. We have prepared a few ideas based on a conversation from the previous board meeting as well as e-mails that were sent to me with proposal ideas. Generally we are staying with things that have been approved in policy in terms of what we have worked on as that is the stuff you guys have already said yes to.

The first proposal is MSI coverage for international students. The total cost would be about \$500,000 and it would cost about \$100 per student to provide the coverage. We estimate the number of beneficiaries for the coverage to be around 5,000. The estimates are rough.

MR (Vice Chair): A concern I have when talking about international coverage is individuals might come into the country for coverage alone as it is a great incentive to come to school here. So my question is has there been a case study where a school has tried a similar policy?

JW (ED): They have done this in many different provinces, I think the point you raised Matt is the primary concern from government. There are ways that a system like this could be exploited definitely.

PR (SMUSA): Most times when we re-apply for visas you have to have a doctor say that you have not travelled to any other country in the last few months.

DS (ASU): Even just by looking at the chart, you can see that the savings of implementation are higher than the costs. Do you have the average numbers for the total savings?

JW (ED): I have the numbers on an institution-by-institution basis only. Today is really about getting approval from the board on the three items we are asking for and then we will bring the finalized document to the board. On another note, some research suggests that international students are less likely to access health services. Some of that has to do with confusion about health coverage. So, there is a decent possibility that providing this service would encourage international students to seek health services more often. We could also compete with the four other provinces that have already implemented this policy change. The policy change also removes the requirement that you can't leave the province for more than 31 consecutive days in the summer, which can limit the employment opportunities for students who would like to seek employment in another province.

The second proposal is about student assistance and tax credits. This is about \$64 million by 2014 in the GRR and the tuition education tax credits that could be reallocated to the student assistance program. These recommendations are really the same as those in our student financial assistance

report. One key thing element of this is that the \$64 million exceeds the cost of the recommendations for the student assistance program. However we just don't know the full cost of the recommendations we have given. I suspect the decision regarding the GRR will be made this year. One note, every year the cost of the program goes up, it is because more and more people are receiving benefits from the GRR who might resent losing it.

The next proposal I have is the graduate scholarships, so it is \$3.7 million to create 10-15 thousand dollar scholarships for 300 graduate students per year. The government committed to doing this and took this idea from a proposal we gave before. The number of scholarships was designed to match the number of scholarships offered in Ontario on a per student basis and the value of the scholarships was designed to match Ontario as well. We are proposing to connect the research to provincial, social and economic priorities. The government would like the grant to be tied to the growth sectors in the economy. Our feeling regarding the scholarship at the staff level was for the grant to be relevant to Nova Scotia. We are connecting with our grad students group to get their take.

The last proposal I have here is to index the value of the Nova Scotia university student bursaries. If we indexed it would mean an immediate 3% growth in the value of the bursaries which is above \$30 million, just under \$1 million a year in costs. The costs estimates are high because of inflation. The basic issue is the value of the bursary declines each year in relation to tuition and inflation. Example: government says tuition is growing by 3% each year and it's really growing by 3.4% for a Nova Scotia student.

AB (Chair): I will start off; I think the first proposal is really interesting. It is something that has been on the agenda for a long time.

JM (Kingstec NSCCSA): I have to say I like all of these proposals but for the sake of my students I don't see how many of these proposals would affect the community colleges much. I think out of all of the proposals the MSI coverage would have the biggest effect as we have some international student population, but it is still rather small.

MR (Vice Chair): For me I think 1, 2 and 3 makes the most sense as it covers the most amounts of our constituents.

AB (Chair): Is everyone okay with going with those three asks? Should we have a vote on that? (*Will bring completed draft to next board meeting for approval*).

6) Off-Campus Housing Position Paper

RECESS TO PRESENT REPORT

JW (ED): I want to ask for feedback on the two targets that we proposed that we would like the board to decide between. The first target that we proposed was for 1 in 3 students to be in accommodations associated with their university. The second target is a drop from 33% to 30% - you only have to increase residence capacity by a third. In terms of the difference in the number of units the second proposal is a 4,000 unit increase and the first proposal is 2,700 unit increase. The thinking is the housing capacity should be affordable, and we are thinking that the additional

housing options could be run cooperatively or by a student housing authority. Is there a preference from the board one which target they would like us to go forward with?

JM (Kingstec NSCCSA): Would it be more reasonable to shoot for the stars so to speak or go for the lower target? These targets are achievable I assume.

DA (Research Officer): I feel more comfortable with going with the lower target, simply because a lot of the research has not been done yet.

MR (Vice Chair): My primary concern goes back to conversations that we had. My caution is that I wouldn't want us to intervene too much. The model that I would support would be a private investor residence program and run for a fee. I don't like the idea of universities running something like this. I think it will get us all into a lot of problems. I just don't think we should be asking universities to get into a field where they are not skilled.

JW (ED): What if we change the language to revolve around post-secondary institutions and students?

MR (Vice Chair): I would stick to the relationships around private business.

JW (ED): I am reluctant to say that because we would be limiting other stakeholders.

AB (Chair): If I read the recommendation correctly, it only refers to post-secondary institutions. As a result I might think it only involved post-secondary institutions so maybe change that to and other stakeholders.

AB (Chair): If there are no other concerns, can I get a motion to approve the recommendations in this report?

Darcy Shea (ASU) **Moved** and Jeremy Mott (Kingstec NSCCSA) **seconded the motion:**

Whereas StudentsNS holds the following Principles:

Students aged 15-29 without families should not be eligible for affordable housing because their situation is transitional, with exceptions, where applicable, for students from communities underrepresented in post-secondary education.

Policies to support student's access to housing they can afford must not jeopardize the ability of other low-income people to access affordable housing.

Students must be able to access suitable and adequate housing that they can afford, either on- or off-campus.

Policies, programs, and services in post-secondary education should meet student expectations to help prepare them for lifelong success, including in their citizenship, careers, and personal wellbeing.

Students represent a significant share of rental housing demand in Nova Scotia, especially in the immediate vicinity of post-secondary institutions.

A rental housing market that is responsive to the needs of students should provide a range of choices to match diverse student demand and incomes.

Student housing should be considered as a distinct and important factor in shaping healthy, affordable communities.

Students Unions have an important role to play in developing healthy communities and rental markets.

Promoting home ownership may be an effective strategy to support youth retention.

Whereas StudentsNS has identified the following Concerns:

The complex jurisdictional lines around housing, and especially student housing, make the sector difficult to navigate and address meaningfully.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation has very little ability to track housing trends in small communities in Nova Scotia.

There is a serious lack of data on the secondary housing market, and almost no sense of the volume of illegal basement apartments, split houses, and room-rental arrangements that students often inhabit.

Statistics Canada data on Post-Secondary students living at home versus living in temporary rental arrangements is prohibitively expensive and difficult to access.

The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services does not consider the significance of student populations in either the collection of their data or in the decisions they consequently make about how and where to build affordable housing.

The accessibility and affordability of data on students' living arrangements presents a serious obstacle to informed analysis and policy-making in the private and public affordable housing sectors.

Student assistance allocations do not meet students' needs to live on-campus.

Student assistance criteria and affordable housing shortages push lower income students to live further from campus, which adversely impacts on their academic success notably in comparison to their wealthier peers.

Privately developed, student-focused off-campus rental units may be suitable for students, but there is a poor understanding of their effect on the affordability of rental units in the surrounding community. In post-secondary institution communities, competition for rental spaces often pits students against lower income renters, which can magnify existing affordable housing shortages while driving up the cost of rental housing overall.

Universities across Nova Scotia depend on the rental housing market in towns and municipalities to absorb demand for housing, ignoring the impacts on low-income renters.

The cost of housing on the Halifax Peninsula is causing students to move further from their post-secondary institutions.

Evidence supporting home ownership as an incentive for graduates to stay in Nova Scotia is currently lacking.

Recent graduates likely face greater challenges purchasing their first home in Nova Scotia than in the past.

Nova Scotia universities and their communities generally do not have collaborative mechanisms for planning and monitoring the quality and affordability of housing for students.

Halifax universities are duplicating efforts to provide guidance on off-campus housing to students, leading to poor quality at greater expense.

Systematic under-informing of students regarding their tenancy rights and responsibilities significantly reduces their capacity for effective self-advocacy.

International students are especially vulnerable to abuses of their tenancy rights.

Universities are not providing adequate supports to international students, especially considering their greater vulnerability to tenant abuse.

Deregulated rent makes possible exorbitant rental fee increases that reduce access to affordable housing.

Rent control measures in the context of affordable housing shortages may aggravate studentification and student crowding, making it more difficult for low-income families to find affordable housing. Landlords too often collect rent payments or security deposits as advances from poorly informed tenants.

Landlords too often collect rent payments or security deposits as advances from uninformed tenants. The Mediation, Hearings, Appeals and Collections Process under the Residential Tenancy Act is too onerous, so that generally tenants will only pursue the most abusive and costly cases.

Be It Resolved That StudentsNS makes the following Recommendations:

The Province, universities, municipalities and other stakeholders should work with Students Nova Scotia to create a Student Housing Strategy that compliments the Provincial Housing Strategy and sets a goal to significantly increase the share of students living in units offered by their post-secondary institutions.

All universities should establish Housing Offices responsible for student housing on and off campus, including through maintaining housing partnerships with municipalities and the Province, as well as community organizations, student groups and private companies where applicable.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission should evaluate the performance of university housing services.

Post-secondary institutions should work together to create centralized off-campus housing resources for students, including notably a common web portal, particularly where institutions share communities.

Students Nova Scotia should be granted a seat on the Housing Nova Scotia Advisory Board.

The Province of Nova Scotia must collaborate with Students Nova Scotia if it chooses to explore possible modalities for a graduate home ownership program pursuant to the Housing Strategy.

The Nova Scotia Student Assistance Program should increase its allocations for housing and utilities to meet the average costs for the types of units it expects students to inhabit, eventually on a community-by-community basis.

The Nova Scotia Student Assistance Program should provide students living in residence the resources to meet the cost of their residence space and standard mandatory meal plans.

The Province should create a new agency to collect and hold damage deposits in trust or give this capacity to Service Nova Scotia.

The Province should collect a move-in and –out form upon the start and termination of a lease to record the state of the unit as assessed by both the landlord and the tenant.

The Province or individual municipalities should develop a Handyperson Service that will investigate instances where tenants allege that landlords are ignoring requests for upkeep and, where necessary, make basic repairs at the landlords' expense.

Service Nova Scotia should keep public records of rental properties' histories, including ownership, rent, and tenancy board investigations.

The Residential Tenancy arm of Service Nova Scotia should require that landlords file an explanation when they increase rent beyond inflation.

ASU: In Favour

DSU: Abstains

SMUSA: In Favour

StFXSU: In Favour

Motion Passes

AB (Chair): I would ask if it is acceptable to the board to move the decision on the renewal of Executive Director's contract to the end of the round table

Approved by general consent

7) Action items moving forward

i. #StudentsSpeakOut campaign and petition

JW (ED): We launched on Monday and we received pretty good coverage, Global, CBC and News 95.7 which was nice because it complemented the student assistance report coverage. The campaign is focused on the recommendations in the petition. The idea is to get as many signatures as possible for Advocacy Week. The success or failure of the petition and campaign depends a lot on your student unions' ability to get those signatures.

AS (Campaigns Coordinator): I have done some research to show you how much of an impact that you can have by using social media—so, for example, with Darcy, if all of her followers on Twitter were online at the same time she could reach upwards of 9,000 people with one tweet. When you have an issue like student debt, you already have a captive audience who wants to listen to you. At the same time there is so much negativity that it is somewhat easy to see something about student debt and brush it off, but with the media reception that we received after launch, it is a positive sign. Jonathan was on the Rick Howe show, Global did an amazing video of the StudentsSpeakOut video that was very compelling. How do we share these stories that motivate people to click on the link to sign the petition? When we make these debt stories public we create something that is compelling for people who would not normally sign the petition.

ii. Advocacy week

JW (ED): I realized we should have sent notices to the caucuses' offices; however I just sent e-mails to all the MLAs. The way it is working out now is the week we proposed for Advocacy Week the Liberal Party is doing a caucus retreat; they actually invited us to come up with them but said that we would not be able to talk with all the MLAs and this might not be ideal. They subsequently suggested that StudentsNS could join in on a full caucus meeting in Halifax which would allow for individual meetings with MLAs.

iii. Student-Government Roundtable

JW(ED): We do not have a brief presentation for this. The Minister is going to be attending.

iv. Mental Health Conference

JW (ED): I still have not received many confirmations as to who will be attending. The invitation is out and would love it if you could invite others from your student union to join. There are some presentations that have confirmed to be presenting.

v. Student assemblies

JW (ED): We are trying to get Mend the Gap events on each campus. My understanding is we have received contacts from a couple of universities. The SMU student assembly will happen towards the end of the month and StFX in early February.

Meeting moved In Camera to discuss renewal of the Executive Director's contract.

ADJOURNMENT