

Bill 100 ignored the rights of majority of workers in province

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To the editor:

Last November, Nova Scotia's NDP government introduced Bill 100 – labour legislation that effectively ignored the rights of the majority of workers in this province. In fact, it was only after intense pleading from non-union employers and an Opposition filibuster that the government agreed to make even minimal changes to the bill to ensure its passing.

As part of the changes announced through Bill 100, the newly created Labour Management Review Committee has a mandate to review, report on and make recommendations to the Minister of Labour and Workforce Development on labour-relations issues. It is comprised of ten committee members: five union representatives and five representatives from unionized employers. Despite the important role played by this committee, not a single non-union representative sits among them.

Now Nova Scotia's government is sending another clear signal that non-unionized workers are taking a back seat to the NDP's union friends. As president of the Mainland Building and Construction Trades Council, Cordell Cole was at the heart of the NDP election funding scandal. His organization, representing unionized employees, donated \$50,000 to the NDP during the 2009 election, in clear violation of the \$5,000 campaign funding cap. Despite his involvement in the scandal and the fact that they were fined \$10,000 for the scheme, the NDP government used their majority to appoint Cole to the Labour Management Review Committee.

The fact that this committee has so much influence over labour issues in this province but not a single non-unionized representative is absolutely shameful. Almost 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's workers are non-unionized. It's unbelievable that the government can deny the vast majority of Nova Scotians a seat at this table but happily appoint one of their union bagmen.

This is just the latest snub this government has made to non-unionized Nova Scotians. Last September, the Department of Labour and Workforce Development made a number of regulatory changes that were made without consultation or public announcement. As a result, it is now easier than ever for unions to organize and grow – potentially forcing small and medium size businesses to pay additional fees for union programs, denying the right of freedom of choice for Nova Scotians who don't want to belong to a union, and further expanding union influence within our current government.

This ongoing favouritism toward unions in this province needs to stop. All hard-working Nova Scotians deserve equal representation and respect when it comes to our labour laws. Merit Contractors Association of Nova Scotia has been working on behalf of our open shop/union free members to have our voice heard by our elected government. We encourage all non-union Nova Scotians to join us and make it clear that we will not remain silent as our rights are ignored.

Sincerely,

Heather Cruickshanks
President
Merit Contractors Association of Nova Scotia