

NDP decisions cause for concern

As I write this, the fall sitting of the Legislature is winding down. I've taken some time to think about some of the decisions the government has made over the past few years, and I have to admit I'm very concerned.

Nova Scotia doesn't have a lot of money to throw around. People are leaving in droves for greener pastures. So the decisions the provincial government makes about spending our tax dollars are crucial.

What concerns me is that the NDP government gave \$590 million of taxpayers' money to six large corporations. What happened next? These corporations laid off more than 1,300 Nova Scotians. One company went bankrupt. Two companies closed. Two others are on the brink. That's more than half a billion dollars to lose 1,300 jobs.

I don't think spending without safeguards is an effective use of our tax dollars.

As Liberal Leader Stephen McNeil said recently in an op-ed:

"Liberals think that when we enter into economic development deals with business, taxpayer money needs to be protected. There are three ways we can better protect taxpayer dollars while growing our economy and creating jobs."

"First, taxpayers deserve guarantees – when their money is spent to create jobs, those jobs should actually be created. The government promised more than 15,000 jobs as a result of these deals. Despite Dexter's promises, more than 1,300 Nova Scotians received pink slips."

"Second, much of the money given to these corporations was in the form of forgivable loans – this is money that will never be repaid. We do not think the government should be just giving away money to corporations – the money this government gives to businesses must be repayable."

"Third, we need more transparency around the deals Dexter is signing with businesses. Liberals tabled a bill in the House that would ensure the government's deals with business were made public and that job promises would be audited on a regular basis. If the government is going to spend our money, we deserve to see the deals we are financing. Such transparency is the only way to ensure our tax dollars are not wasted."

The NDP's economic record since coming to office has been poor – and that's being charitable. Under their watch, we've had the worst economic growth of any province in Canada. We've lost 3,400 full time jobs ; in fact, more Nova Scotians are unemployed now than during the recession.

When you also consider that the NDP gutted education by cutting \$65 million from the public system, that they cut \$100 million from universities – prime economic drivers in the province – you have to ask yourself: is this what you voted for?

Kelly Regan is the MLA for Bedford - Birch Cove. You can reach her at kelly@kellyregan.ca or 407-3777.