

## **The NDP's Fudge It Budget**

The provincial budget the NDP introduced April 4 is not balanced. The government's attempt to pass this document off as such is a serious disappointment for the people of Nova Scotia.

The NDP maintains the fiction its budget is balanced because of a neat piece of accounting trickery. It borrowed money last year to make this year's payments to two universities. The NDP took \$34 million out of the 2013 budget and paid Acadia and NSCAD on March 31<sup>st</sup> instead of April 1<sup>st</sup>, meaning that portion of 2013 university funding was actually paid by and part of the 2012 budget. The NDP inflated the 2012 deficit and reduced the bottom line for 2013.

When the NDP pulled this same stunt back in 2009, a local editorial said this shell game was "deeply disappointing" – and resulted in a major hit to the government's credibility.

Even without the accounting sleight-of-hand, this balancing act hinges on a significant amount of future economic growth – a prediction not supported by reality. For example, the NDP says the government will collect an additional \$145 million in personal income tax revenue in the coming year. However, the same budget document shows the government predicts an increase in the unemployment rate this year and next. How can the NDP expect to collect significantly more income tax revenue when fewer Nova Scotians will be working? It doesn't make sense.

The NDP government also expects to collect \$63 million more in HST revenue, again, with fewer people working this year and next. Doesn't make sense.

The NDP has completely failed to grow the economy over the past four years. Their own prediction of increased unemployment proves it. They've charged taxpayers 8 per cent more for 1,400 user fees and collected a billion dollars extra in HST -- and yet they can't balance the budget. Why? Because Nova Scotia's economy is still hemorrhaging jobs.

This budget may have been balanced on paper, but it won't be balanced in reality.

Nova Scotians are unhappy to see our public education system take yet another cut. They expected this government – after hacking \$65 million from our education system, forcing 700 teachers from their jobs – would finally support public education. Instead, the government chopped another \$11 million dollars from that budget line. There is no fat left to cut. Programs or teachers will take the hit.

In the last election the NDP made many promises. In the election debate, Darrell Dexter claimed he could balance the provincial budget without raising taxes. We now know this wasn't true. His government has tried fiscal flim-flam tactics to hide the true state of our financial affairs with this budget. Why should we trust them again?

*Kelly Regan is the MLA for Bedford – Birch Cove. You can reach her at 407-3777 or [kelly@kellyregan.ca](mailto:kelly@kellyregan.ca)*