

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Linda Yates [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** March 13, 2025 9:14 AM  
**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Cc:** Heather McCance; Greg Aikins; Jim Musgrave  
**Subject:** Attn: Chair, Honourable Becky Druhan re: Public Bills submission for Bill 12  
**Attachments:** AST Bill 12 response-2.pdf

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

**\*\* EXTERNAL EMAIL / COURRIEL EXTERNE \*\***

Exercice caution when opening attachments or clicking on links / Faites preuve de prudence si vous ouvrez une pièce jointe ou cliquez sur un lien

Dear Honourable Druhan

Atlantic School of Theology wanted to make an in-person presentation to the Public Bills Committee, however, short notice has made it difficult for us to do so. Please find attached a written submission from Atlantic School of Theology.

Thank you for the important work that you do to improve proposed legislation.

In peace, Rev. Dr. Linda Yates  
Chair, Board of Governors  
Atlantic School of Theology  
660 Franklin St.  
Halifax, NS  
B3H 3B5

Atlantic School of Theology  
Feedback on proposed Bill 12  
March 13, 2025

## **INTRODUCTION**

Atlantic School of Theology (“AST”) appreciates that the government of Nova Scotia is interested in the vitality of universities, particularly as expressed in board governance. AST is pleased to say that our Board of Governor complies with university board best practices.

We also appreciate the opportunity to provide this input on Bill 12, with a view to improving it and building on the partnership that has existed successfully between the university community that includes AST and the Province over many decades.

## **BACKGROUND ON AST**

- 98% of our graduates find employment within 6 months of graduation.
- as counselling and support services have been pulled out of Nova Scotia communities in the last decades, our graduates have stepped up to fill in the gaps
- The success of the school is in part due to the unique composition of AST’s Board of Governors:
  - 15 appointed members, 5 each from the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Dioceses of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island, and Fredericton, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth
  - 2 faculty
  - 2 students
- AST has students of many denominations, of different faiths, and of no faith. All come to learn how to think critically, contribute to their communities, and become more resilient.

The unusual but effective composition of our Board of Governors represents a wide constituency that in turn results in many positive outcomes, including virtually full employment of our graduates. The requirements of Bill 12 in terms of Board composition would dramatically change the structure and function of the Board.

## **UNIVERSITY BOARD GOVERNANCE ACT**

The proposed changes in the *University Board Governance Act* could and would likely adversely affect the delicate recipe that is the AST governance structure. We suggest that our concern would be shared by other Universities.

Our suggestions:

- the Province does not go forward with a power to appoint up to half of the Board members. A single Board member appointed by the Province would allow for the liaison needs of the Province, and if that is not acceptable, something far less than one-half (such as one-quarter or one-third) would preserve both operational autonomy and protect the Minister from negative public perception
- tying Board or quorum to in-person participation of provincial appointees puts at risk the ability of the Board to do its work, so that no special quorum rules should attach to representatives of the Province on the Board.
- The requirement of a revitalization plan for a particular university initiates serious changes, without requirement of a corresponding consultation with affected parties. The criteria by which this option is initiated remains vague.

We express a concern as well that the regulations are not before us, and should be the subject of in-depth consultation with the university communities.

#### **CLOSING COMMENTS: ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND ETHICAL DEMANDS**

Atlantic School of Theology, along with its sister universities and colleges in Nova Scotia, considers itself a fiduciary and partner with the Province. We receive public money, and we are stewards of that trust, an obligation we take with the utmost of care and seriousness.

But we also have other significant obligations. There are no guarantees within Bill 12 around academic freedom and freedom of course composition. Universities have been around in various forms for almost a millennium. They have been engines of change, economic advancement and the development of human rights awareness. All universities, and theological schools in particular, have a responsibility to encourage debate, ethical deliberation and the formation of novel ideas. This is rarely comfortable for governments of the day but has been foundational for human thriving. If the Province is not interested in governing and restricting academic freedom, then we suggest it should be willing to enshrine this assurance in Bill 12.