

My impression of the movement against privatization up to this day

I have attended four town hall type meetings on the important issue of privatization of crucial sectors of the health care system.

- (1) Moncton – public meeting with Health minister Benoît Bourque;
- (2) Moncton – NBCC presentation by Cecile Cassista to approximately 80 students and staff;
- (3) Quispamsis – Town Hall meeting with Cecile Cassista;
- (4) Sackville – Town Hall meeting with Cecile Cassista.

The halls are almost full to capacity. One can sense the anger, outrage and frustration of these people who have been served with a decision they do not like and do not buy, and for which they have not been consulted. There is a real need among them to express these feelings, but government officials are not listening. They know better. They have the answer. They know best what is good for each one of us. They try to sell us the idea that the Extra-Mural program, which is on solid grounds, working well, and according to all the crown jewel of the health care system, well operated by the Regional Health Authorities, would be best operated in the hands of the private sector. It would make the service so much better, according to them, and so much more efficient. Same talking points are being used all the time by all government officials.

Lisa Harris, minister responsible for Seniors, is present at all these events. One wonders if she is not acting as a spy for the government! She is very faithful in using same talking points and in following marching orders to a «t». At the NBCC event, she tried to steal the show. She had to be contested and put in her place, that which she deserved.

At all of these meetings, one can witness thunderous applause to show opposition to privatization of important sectors of the health care system. All intervenors, except one in each place, are against the decision taken unilaterally by government to privatize the Extra-Mural Program of which they are very fond.

If these public events are a sampling of how people think in the rest of the province, one can easily conclude that the government has miscalculated public opinion and is losing the battle on this ground.

At the Sackville meeting, Debbie Ellison expressed a truism that should be shared more often and with more insistence. Her comments were very much appreciated by the audience. In summary, this is what she said. As taxpayers, we invest in government and a qualified civil service comprising experts in their field and other dedicated workers. We have to make good and better use of their expertise. We do not have to privatize in order to get quality services – which private corporations do not necessarily deliver. We can agree on services and operate them well on our own to the betterment of the population.

Good comments on Debbie's part and so very true. I simply would add that we have to all be more like Debbie and go to the mikes at meetings and share our values and comments. Otherwise, others take the floor and make their sales pitch.

Cecile's power-point is powerful and telling. It is very well received by all of her audiences because it is the product of much serious work and good research. No one contests her arguments which means that they are solid. Her presentations are excellent for their firmness, convictions, coming from a very dedicated person working on behalf of seniors and the causes they cherish. She deserves all our gratitude for all she does on behalf of New Brunswickers. The cause is not only worthwhile, it is crucial that it be backed up.

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Moncton, October 22, 2017