

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I am zooming in from my home in Parrsboro. My name is Rooks Field-Green I'll be speaking to Clauses 52-64 but also referencing Clauses 80-111. Through my work at Ship's Company Theatre, I teach theatre to young people at Parrsboro Regional Elementary School and High School and I also organize community-based programs for all ages.

I love my community, and I want to see it thrive. I am speaking today because the clauses in this act, as well as its companion act, effectively threaten my way of life, and threaten the health of my community.

I grew up in a rural town, and as a queer person, I would never have dreamed of living rurally ever again. But after an acting gig brought me to Parrsboro in 2021, my dreams changed. My partner, Carol and I moved here in 2023, Carol is a registered nurse and I am a theatre artist. We could see a future for both of us in Parrsboro. Unfortunately, Carol developed a debilitating chronic illness that same year which has meant they have been unable to work.

While we navigated the challenging road to diagnosis - which is necessary to receive any sort of disability support through insurance - my artist salary needed to cover all of the bills. Although my 30 grand salary was by far the most I'd ever made in a year it was nowhere near enough to cover the rising costs of life. We could have left Parrsboro at that point to move closer to our families out of province. But we stayed because of our community, because I got to know the kids in town through my work and I could see the difference I was making in their lives\* I tabled a document with testimonials of parents whose kids have benefited from my work. We stayed because we see the value in this place. The financial measures act changes things for us. If it's a straw that breaks a camel's back - this piece of legislation would take out a herd of elephants.

But the financial measures act isn't just affecting my family. It's affecting all rural families at a disproportionate rate than our urban-based counterparts and is therefore, discriminatory in nature - I also tabled a document on the rights of children in Canada that supports this statement.

Some examples of rural discrimination in this act: higher taxes for Private woodlot owners. The majority of private woodlot owners are located in rural communities. Our beloved Davison's maple syrup and blueberry farm will be hit hard by this clause. Farmers in Parrsboro are among the biggest employers behind the arts/culture/tourism sector of course.

Clauses 52-58 again target rural communities where the majority of conservation easement disputes and crown-land lumber resource extraction will be occurring. I could continue by talking about how Gypsum extraction and meat inspection farmer protections weigh heaviest on rural areas but I think you can see what I'm getting at here. Why does this government want to hurt rural communities? Why target rural areas with such punishing measures and from so many directions at once? Has there been proper thought into how this financial measures act will affect rural communities? What was the process of creating this act? Who was consulted?

Cumberland County has among the highest rates of poverty in this province and an even higher rate of child poverty. Why are the biggest local employers in rural areas being punished rather

than supported in this legislation? Who are these clauses going to benefit? It certainly isn't the hardworking people in towns like Parrsboro.

Most of my work is with children and youth. I would like to know where in this financial measures act is there any strategic plan for addressing the rates of child poverty in rural areas? Where are the tax exemptions for small entrepreneurs in rural areas? Why does the Casino receive a tax break while small business owners are receiving less support and less protection? Why does the urban-based bridge toll relief in Halifax mean that rural places have to make do with less and less?

There's no cost to access our school drama clubs because we know that many families already struggle to put food on the table. But these programs are not free to run - they require experienced and skilled labour which is why I rely on artist-in-schools programs, Artists in Communities funding, feed ns, pride health, as well as the support of partner organizations like the Fundy Geo Museum and Autumn House in order to be able to offer our programs at lowest possible cost to families.

Due to unfair funding caps in rural public school systems, the programming that we provide is often the ONLY arts education our kids receive. Our high school doesn't have music classes and can only offer an all-grades theatre class every two years.

These drama clubs run because I run them. I run them because I know what it feels like to be a kid in a rural area when the world feels like it's given up on you and how art spaces can open doors to safety and confidence. I want to keep providing these services, I want to invest my time and energy into doing what I do best - teaching kids about theatre and play, I want Carol to recover **here** and to return to work in health care **here**. The financial measures act is making it so much harder for us to remain in Parrsboro. It's making it so much harder for communities like ours to support each other and to be self-sufficient.

What is the cost/benefits analysis on job and income loss in rural areas due to the clauses in this act? Why is there multiple clauses in this act that cuts Nova Scotia off from revenue streams while also targeting rural areas that are only going to need more social assistance in the coming years if this act passes as is. We need help - rural spaces have been underfunded for years - we need an investment in rural living but this Financial measures act is the opposite of an investment in rural areas - it's a robbery. Please don't take any more from us.

I wanted to stand up today and share stories about all of the wonderful people I know and love who live in rural areas in this province. I wish I could share stories about the brilliant, resilient and creative youth in Parrsboro. But I only had 5 minutes which is why I have included some testimonials of all of the other voices that stand with me today

Thank you.