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NDP stalwart quits, denounces party

Government not much different than the others, ex-treasurer says

By DAVID JACKSON Provincial Reporter
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Pamela Harrison, front, speaks during a government function early last year. Harrison, disgruntled by the provincial NDP, left the party on Friday. (Darren Pittman / Staff)

A former executive with the provincial New Democratic Party left the party Friday because of her disappointment with the Dexter government.

Pamela Harrison of Halifax, a past treasurer of the provincial NDP, as well as a former constituency president and campaign volunteer, said there's been no sign of the NDP government elected in June being any different than governments of other stripes, and not enough action on social justice issues.

"I believed that the party's stated vision of 'a better deal for today's families' actually included those with mental health concerns, lesser ability in the areas of both physical and mental health, single moms and their children, the homeless and women experiencing violence and abuse in their lives," she wrote in an opinion piece submitted to The Chronicle Herald.

"Wrong again . . . and how foolish I feel, to have imagined that the hundreds of resolutions passed at provincial council were actually more than an exercise in the creation of 'NDP Believers.' "

Harrison, a long-time social activist focusing on women's issues, said in an interview that she saw the same lack of decorum in the legislature last fall as with past governments, and criticized the government for looking at raising the harmonized sales tax.

"That is the most regressive tax that anybody could put on the citizens of Nova Scotia, and those who have the least will be impacted the most by that tax," she said.

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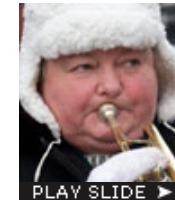
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She also noted the apparent inconsistency with the federal NDP, which opposed the creation of the HST in Ontario and British Columbia.

Finance Minister Graham Steele has said if there is to be a sales tax increase, there would also be help for people with low incomes.

Premier Darrell Dexter is on vacation, and his office referred calls for comment to the party office.

Provincial secretary Ed Wark said Ms. Harrison's departure is unfortunate. Wark said he thinks the government has been excellent on social justice issues.

Wark said he hasn't heard grumbling from party members, and he's heard a lot of support for the government from within the party.

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