

## NS Politics: Province will investigate contributions to NDP

By Paul McLeod, Metro Halifax

Source: Metro Halifax

[HALIFAX, NS] - Nova Scotia's chief electoral officer will look into union donations made to the NDP to examine whether they violated election finance laws.

During a day in the first week of the campaign the NDP said it was couriered nine separate cheques of \$5,000 – the maximum allowed donation – from nine different unions, all members of the Mainland Nova Scotia Building Trades Council.

“At the time it seemed like a very good thing,” NDP provincial secretary Ed Wark said. “The contributions came in on nine separate cheques made out for \$5,000 each. They were signed by the signatories for those unions, so there were no questions raised at that point.”

But the NDP later learned the council had offered to reimburse the unions for the donations. The party voluntarily returned the money Monday after a freelance journalist told them of the conflict over the weekend.

With the NDP ahead in the polls and a week until the election, both the Liberals and Progressive Conservative campaigns spent much of yesterday questioning union ties to the NDP. The Tories filed a letter with Elections Nova Scotia requesting chief electoral officer Christine McCulloch contact the RCMP to investigate this case. They said the NDP did not have proper safeguards in place and speculated there may be other illegitimate donations.

“It stretches credulity to think that an official agent getting cheques from an umbrella group like this all in the same day is simply coincidence,” said Tory party spokesman Jordi Morgan.

Elections Nova Scotia spokesman Dana Doiron said the NDP did the right thing in returning the money. But he said the trades council could potentially face fines of up to \$140,000. Elections Nova Scotia can level fines of up to \$50,000 plus twice the money improperly donated.



NDP Leader Darrell Dexter told the news media that he acted "entirely appropriately" in relation to the union donation scandal. Ryan Taplin photo, Metro Halifax.