
From: Bonnie & Larry Rafuse <lkrafuse@live.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2014 1:41 PM
To: Office
Subject: Law Amendments Bill no.1

My name is Bonnie Rafuse. I am a Registered Nurse who has worked for Capital Health over the last 23 years. I do not support any legislation that will result in Health Care workers being forced into a union without having the opportunity to vote. Four unions worked together and developed a plan to create Bargaining Associations, similar to the associations that exist in B.C. The plan would have addressed government concerns about too many bargaining units and contracts. But this Bill isn't really about streamlining health care or improving access to needed services. It's clearly about diminishing the power of unions and health care workers, and setting the stage for wage restraint and diminished benefits. This legislation is being introduced with no public discussion or consultation with the affected workers. Health care workers deserve appreciation for the work they do, and should definitely have a say in which union will represent them in the future. This legislation will drive health care workers out of Nova Scotia at a time when we're facing "alarming" shortages.

This type of legislation is unconstitutional and is the first of its kind in the country. There is no instance in Canadian history where workers have had their union imposed on them. Health restructuring in BC allowed members to stay with their union by allowing for bargaining associations similar to what the NS unions have purposed. And it's worked well without any problems for the 20 years that it has been instituted.

I have been a Registered Nurse for 28 years. I work within my Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. I respect my patients, my managers and my colleagues. Our patients get excellent care. Despite the lack of support from those who paint us to be mute followers of a "non-nurse" leader, we provide a high level service to the members of this community. I work days, evenings, nights and short notice. I do not work overtime. Due to the nature of the shiftwork, I have not been able to fit my children and their care over the years into the standard hours of sitters and daycare so my husband and I work opposite shifts. I work every shift with people who are sick...that is why they are admitted...viruses, infections, community outbreaks...we look after them. So we, too, get sick and require time off work. Then our children get sick and we require time off to look after them too. No hidden agenda there for sick time requirements. I work holidays. Our children have grown up knowing that every second year, their mother works Christmas...sometimes every year I work Easter and Thanksgiving. I also do not get vacation on March Break and, until last year (after 20 years!), none in the summer due to limits on number of people who can be off. I accumulate days off when I work holidays but cannot take them as time off because "operational requirements do not permit"...there is not enough staff to replace. The workload gets larger, people are sicker and staff numbers are down...a country wide trend that shows no sign of getting better before it gets worse.

I truly feel that this bill was created with enough legal knots tying it together to firmly put in its place some Government employees who this Government feel have been pesky enough of a problem to deserve vindictive, unfair and, indeed unheard of restrictions on their rights. How dare we, the frontline workers who care for the ill and dying stand up for the right to a contract providing adequate sick time to heal or mend when we have become sick or injured providing this care. How dare we expect to spend Holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving with our patients and their families and still want to be able to have compensated time to spend with our own families afterwards. To think we expect in this time when our utility bills have all gone up, our groceries are costing more, gas is expensive, parking rates at work have increased-to expect that we should be able to fairly negotiate a wage and benefits in keeping with these increases. We need to feel confident that the union representing us at negotiations is the one we feel will look out for our interests.

Union representation means that an employer falling on desperate times of low staff and unfilled shifts cannot unfairly impose requirements on staff that are unsafe and can lead to patient incidents or near incidents. We need a union which will protect our rights when they are being challenged. Both new staff and those nearing retirement have options to

remove themselves from an un-democratic, disrespectful and unsafe healthcare system by leaving. And they will. Some already have.

The right to a fair vote may lead to success for the union I choose and it may lead to a different result. Either way, the majority would have spoken and democracy would have taken place. That, we accept as a society. What we don't accept is a decision which directly affects myself and my family being taken from me and given to an appointed mediator directed to act by a Government who has no respect for worker's rights.

I resent that my years of contracts decided in fair collective bargaining and the benefits gained lawfully and respectfully in a negotiation process are potentially wiped clean by a Government with no respect for worker's rights. An employee with more than twenty years experience being treated like an unwelcome relative to your own contract is unacceptable. Compensation for being a good employee thrown on the table with the option of throwing it all away. Without a fair bargaining process.

My teenagers will be following this process and they will recognize that the Government is instituting a bullying process targeting unions-or a specific union. They will see that this Government is about taking power away from those who oppose their views in a dictatorship fashion to get their own way. They will know that all the Democratic process they have learned about is now in the history class not current events. And they will know when they see the red t-shirts in the parades and at community events that these are not the leaders but the followers. Those who could have been leaders in protecting the rights and freedoms of democracy for their constituents but followed instead. Shame on you all if this legislation comes to pass.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the McNeil government to withdraw this Bill, and accept the bargaining association proposal. Barring that, they should absolutely allow all health care workers to vote. It's their democratic right.

I appreciate this opportunity to communicate my thoughts to the Law Amendments Committee at this time.