

Law Amendments Committee Re: Bill 148

My name is Kim Manthorne, I work for Community Services Child Protection as a Family Support Worker. That means I work directly with parents and families who need to address child protection concerns. I have worked for the provincial gov't for over 20 years and I'm proud of that and the work I do. I am also proud to be an NSGEU member and I am sitting on the larger bargaining committee this round.

Here is one government employee and one affected families perspective on what has transpired thus far.

You and my union came to an agreement however I'm not sure there was a whole lot of negotiating. I think a take or leave it came pretty quick and we were told it was a final offer. This agreement dictates how my family will live in the next four years. I wasn't exactly thrilled with having to cut spending because lets face it ... a wage freeze is a roll back as everyday living expenses don't get frozen, they continue to rise. I may have to look at my daycare expenses for an example. I currently have both of my children enrolled in an excellent small business before and after school care arrangement. There are cheaper options but less quality care for my children. Maybe I won't make that particular sacrifice but these are the thoughts running through my head and I'm sure they are going through the minds of all civil service employees who are hardworking tax payers.

But my union, with a heavy heart recommended acceptance of this agreement. We had just decided this very difficult decision knowing myself and my fellow coworkers deserve better, their families deserve better when out of nowhere we were told the whole membership needed to make the decision very quickly. I felt like this government was taking away my dignity to not only accept a harsh agreement but to force the membership to make an uninformed decision.

You backed off that and agreed we needed to consult with the membership. I almost said thankfully but I am not thanking anyone for almost forcing my coworkers and I to come to hasty decision where most people did not know what was at stake; so we were able to breathe and to start the process of educating the membership.

So now we have bill 148 - the illegal wage restraint act. I feel like I was lied to, my coworkers were lied to, the whole civil service was lied to and every resident of Nova Scotia was lied to. This government had this legislation ready to go. In my opinion you are using it to keep workers under your thumb and now we once again have to make a decision - we will inform our members. But now we are making the decision with our heads in a guillotine and my children standing behind me as the decisions we are making today are going to affect their rights in the future.

My name is Kim Manthorne... a less proud Provincial government employee.