
From: Jenny Trites <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2015 9:00 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Statement About Bill 148

To the Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

My name is Jennifer Trites and I am an Elementary Music Teacher. I have been working for the Halifax Regional School Board since September 2010. I am writing to you to tell you that I consider bill #148 to be an unjust and short-sighted piece of legislation.

Going into this profession I had no illusions about how hard I would need to work; I have chosen a career that is challenging, exciting, and calls for creativity and energy even moment of the day. I can see myself doing this joyfully for the next 30 years.

I am unable to appear before the committee in person since this is Holiday Concert season across the province, and you will not find any teacher busier than a music teacher. Even though these concerts are not technically part of my contract, I love concerts. I love the opportunity to connect with the community, and for the students to really show what they can do.

I am a young teacher (in my first five years of teaching for HRSB), and I keep hearing from your government that young teachers shouldn't mind this contract, as we will still move up the pay scale. But as a young teacher, I will be hurt the most by the changes to the service award.

Teaching is becoming more demanding. We are on the front lines for all of society's struggles: poverty, food security, and mental health to name a few. As I navigate these emerging challenges, is my work less valuable than that of teachers who retired last year? How is this fair to my generation of hard working teachers? What message are you sending to the young people of this province?

As a teacher, I want the best for my students. I am happiest when they are happy and learning, and I go about my day trying to make their short experience in my music classroom an uplifting and energizing one. I want the right to advocate for my students when I see a decision that is having a negative impact on their learning or on their well-being. Class size, class composition, the amount of EPA support given to students with exceptional academic or behavioural needs—all of these things impact children all across the province.

Every day, and on many evenings and weekends, teachers work diligently to provide the best learning opportunities for my students. We arrive at school early to serve students breakfast if they are hungry. We purchase supplies from our own resources for students who could not afford them. We organize extra-curricular activities (in my case, choir and ukulele club) and take groups to special performances in the community outside of school hours. We seek out professional development opportunities on my own time and funded by our own resources not for an upgrade in license, but because we think they will improve our skills as educators.

Bill #148 is fundamentally dishonest. The government claims that they will negotiate, and then call on this legislation if the so-called negotiations don't go their way. This is not what negotiation looks like. This is an attempt to *bully*, to *silence*, and to *dismiss* teacher concerns about the very real challenges we face in our workplace on a daily basis. Challenges to our teaching, which equals challenges to our student's learning. We cannot pretend that there is a disconnect between the two.

Canadian workers have the right to unionize, and unions have the right to collective bargaining in good faith. Using the threat of legislation to avoid this process will impede any hope of cooperation for the benefit of our children and our province. I am a teacher, but I am also a voter and a taxpayer. I care about the financial health of my province, and driving a wedge between teachers and the government will only damage the province I care for.

The attempt by the Nova Scotia Provincial government to silence the voice of those who care deeply for the future of Nova Scotians is unfair and incredibly short sighted. I ask you rethink and reject bill #148. I ask you have courage enough to stand up against bullying, even if that bullying is coming from your own party. Stand up for showing respect for labour laws, and for the people who are dedicating their lives to the children of this province.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Trites
Elementary Music Specialist
NSTU Member
Concerned Nova Scotian