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**From:** Shelly Tonen <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 15, 2015 7:29 PM  
**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Subject:** Letter in support of opposing Bill 148

Dear Chair of the Law Amendments Committee:

My name is Shelly Tonen and I am writing to oppose Bill 148. I wanted to come in to speak; however, I was informed that the list was full this evening and the only time available would be when I am teaching.

Teaching has become an incredibly difficult job and the government's Bill 148 is going to worsen these conditions. Not only has the government stripped us of our constitutional right to fair collective bargaining, but this bill also impedes our ability to advocate for funding that would improve our students learning environments which are our working conditions.

I began my teaching career in 1993 and over the last 20+ years, I have seen a major decline in the educational landscape. We are graduating students who can't read, can't problem-solve, and can't do basic math. How do we expect Canada as a nation to compete globally when our citizens have been short-changed?

The reasons for this drop in education are many and complex. Here are some of my observations. Class sizes are creeping up and up and it is unacceptable, especially when the students are becoming more diverse and needier. I have taught classes of 12-15 and I have taught classes of 35. Let me tell you there is a huge difference in the quality of education that the smaller classes get. They benefit from more one on one time with their teacher. They have a voice and thoughts that actually have an opportunity to be heard by their teacher as well as their peers. It is very typical these days to have 2-4 students on IPPs in every classroom. I have to plan lessons for Science 10. And then I have to spend more time planning lessons that "look like" Science 10 but they have to be at a grade 4 level or a grade 7 level. And then multiply this by 3 to cover all the classes that I teach. I have sometimes spent 3 hours planning a lesson for one student.

I teach high school and I am finding more and more that the incoming students do not have the prerequisite skills for high school. They have never failed in elementary and junior high. They have not been held accountable for meeting deadlines. They haven't developed many study strategies, not to mention time management or organizational skills. They haven't even been accountable for attending. I have some students that miss ridiculous amounts of classes and there is no consequence for it. It ends up putting even more work on the classroom teacher because it seems to be expected that it is *our* responsibility to teach them everything they missed and give them every opportunity to make up work.

More and more of our prep time seems to be disappearing, taken up by duty and PLC meetings. This leaves more and more stuff to be done at home. I knew when I chose to be a teacher that I would have homework and have to mark assessments in my evenings and on weekends, but the amount of time spent away from my family on these school duties is increasing at an alarming rate to the point where I really have to start evaluating my work-life balance. And then there are the hours and hours that teachers spend on extra-curricular activities to ensure that there are a variety of activities, sports, clubs, etc for students to enrich their school experience. Many, many teachers dedicate countless hours to these clubs and they do it because they enjoy their students. At my school last month, all the teachers added up their volunteer hours and among a staff of 35 teachers we had accumulated over 1200 hours! I am the yearbook advisor at my school and I love

to see students get involved and have success in creating something as lasting as a yearbook, but with the demands on my time ever-increasing these days, something has got to give. I would hate to see it be these extracurricular activities that students so enjoy.

In short, the whole system is broken. Instead of cutting funding and making the people on the front lines with students, the teachers, feel like worthless citizens, our government should be increasing funding to find the solutions and begin to fix this system. Our government should be investing in the education of its future citizens. One of the problems that I run across with my non-teacher peers is that they think school is the same as when they went to school. Let me assure you, IT IS NOTHING like when I went to school. If you think this is so, then I urge you to walk a mile in the shoes of any teacher in this province. It pains me to see the government trying to pass this bill with no regard for teacher value. I teach my students to stand up to bullies and I feel like that is what is happening to teachers right now - that we are being bullied. I urge all Liberals to have the courage to vote against Bill 148; to show Nova Scotia's youth who will build up our economy if we allow them an opportunity, that you support them and their educators. I expect all members of the Conservative and NDP parties to vote against Bill 148 because it is wrong and it violates workers' rights.

The only way for this province to develop to its full potential is for our government to invest in its future; its people. Build people first and everything else will follow.

With hope and respect,

Shelly Tonen