

16 December 2015

Jennifer McKeane  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Legislative Counsel Office and Law Amendments Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Bill 148. I do so tentatively, as I feel vulnerable as a public sector employee to speak out against such a Bill, but I feel I must make some comments.

When I joined the Civil Service in 2007, I did so because I was at a stage in my life where job security and good wages were becoming increasingly important to me. My husband and I wanted to start a family, buy a house and contribute to the community, all in Nova Scotia, the province where we have chosen to live.

Both my husband and I are lucky as we have good jobs as public sector employees, and I am thankful for that, and we live comfortably. We have been fortunate over the years to move up through the steps in our compensation range each year within various progressively responsible positions. I am now 'topped out', which means that according to section 13 (1) and (2) of Bill 148, for the next two years, that would mean no step increments in compensation range, therefore, no wage increases at all.

Like most people, we juggle things around to make ends meet on some months, particularly around Christmas. I worry how much more we would need to juggle over the next two years when we experience the cost of living increase all around us. Bills have to be paid and we need to eat, but we may need to make some spending decisions with disposable income. This is the same spending that helps local businesses thrive by shopping locally for Christmas gifts. The same spending that allows me to contribute to the community to organizations such as United Way, ISANS/Syrian Refugees, Phoenix House, and Christmas Angels. The same spending that allowed me to take my children to stay at White Point to see the bunnies on her birthday. This spending contributes to a strong economy in Nova Scotia.

Many Public Sector employees are not in well-paying jobs. Not all can currently make these choices with their disposable income. If I am worried about being able to make these disposable spending choices, there are certainly many others out there who are even more worried today

I am worried that our best talent in the public sector will simply drift off in pursuit of better opportunities. I am hoping to continue raising my two girls in Nova Scotia, and I hope that one day at least one of them will choose to serve the public as a public sector employee, but in the end, we will do what is best for our family.

There are other things I am worried about in the Bill, such as the Long Service Award being restricted to time accumulated until April 2015 at frozen compensation rates. When I can retire in 20 or so years and my daughters are still at University, how valuable will this award be at 2015 wage rates to help assist them through university?

Please reconsider the passage of Bill 148 and not let it proceed. Please let the collective bargaining process proceed fully, and follow the already established methods to bring collective agreements to conclusion.

Sincerely,

Jennifer McKeane