

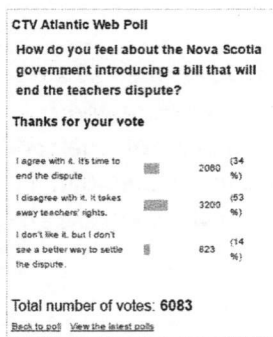
To the Law Amendments Committee:

Please do not allow Bill 75 to become a law in Nova Scotia.

Although Premier Stephen McNeil has stated that he believes in collective bargaining, this piece of legislation proves quite the opposite. Imposing a contract using the law is ultimately the worst example of collective bargaining and could lead to an expensive legal challenge – something the premier has not made obvious to the people of Nova Scotia.

He has also stated that there is no other path forward when, clearly, binding arbitration is another way to come to an agreement. Because he continues to deny the right of the NSTU to participate in binding arbitration, he has essentially decided on the path forward – binding legislation.

Legislation should always be a last resort to create laws where problems exist and solutions are impossible to find. It should be respected for what it is – an everlasting future ‘rule’. Stephen McNeil’s government is not respecting the seriousness and the effects of creating laws. This is a frivolous use of our legal system and assumes this government knows the values of future governments. It also assumes he knows the desires of the citizens of Nova Scotia. In an interview with Steve Murphy of CTV news, he also stated that he makes decisions that are good for all Nova Scotians yet a public opinion poll on the same news station showed that the public felt the government should go back to bargaining.



The premier also said that his government reached an agreement with the NSTU executive on three different occasions but the teachers voted against these agreements. I believe in each case, the executive was under duress to come to an agreement. They shared with their members that the government wasn't willing to compromise on much and Bill 148 or Bill 75 was mentioned in each recommendation to the members to accept the agreement. Even the NSTU lawyer, Ron Pink, talked of consequences of a no vote. Mr. Pink further told members in a Town Hall telephone conference that a constitutional challenge probably wouldn't be successful.

If the NSTU executive accepted and recommended agreements under duress, then legislation would unfairly (and perhaps illegally) take away teachers' future bargaining rights. Premier McNeil is unfairly using his power in the legislature to solve what he perceives to be an 'emergency' when he has not proven that one exists.

Premier McNeil also stated that students need to go back to a sense of normalcy at school and that Work-to-Rule was having a negative effect. If the committee read tweets put out on Twitter by teachers

(#unappreciated), they would know that most teachers have felt that they finally returned to 'normal' teaching. Work-to-Rule directives counselled teachers to stick to the job of teaching and ignore all the interference – PGAP, staff meetings, PowerSchool, and the endless school board and department of education initiatives. We were also asked to stop participating in volunteer extra-curricular activities to show how teachers go above and beyond. The difference students would have noticed was the absence of extra help and sports and activities. They would not have noticed the other directives, except perhaps to have more of their teachers' time in class. These activities do not have to continue as it is up to the individual teachers to give up their personal time to continue these activities. In the premier's attempt to return to 'normal', he may just find that teachers do not wish to volunteer their personal time like they 'normally' did in the past. This will defeat his intention to have students return to 'normal' and expose his real intent – to cut money in education and take away collective bargaining rights.

As a teacher in the Nova Scotia system for the past eight years, I have witnessed many changes and initiatives that were supposed to improve the success of students. Again and again, they are implemented without real thought to the consequences of time, infrastructure and differing abilities in the classroom. Karen Casey has made our education far worse than any other minister of education. Based on a biased survey, and on the advice of 'experts' who had never been in a classroom, she introduced more crippling initiatives while her government cut spending. She then incredulously made teachers even more accountable for these initiatives by creating 'Teaching Standards'. The NSTU executive tried to bargain for better conditions for students as teachers cannot be and do everything. More money for assessment and collaborative time among teachers is not going to help high-needs students.

The NSTU executives have tried to make specific recommendations that would be guaranteed by an agreement and the government has only promised to continue to 'talk' through commissions and committees. The government's argument that Work-to-Rule is detrimental to students is not true and cannot be proven by the premier. The government continues to avoid its responsibility to negotiate in good faith and create real education reform, and is now desperately using the law to do so. Please do not let them pass Bill 75. It would be a dishonour to both teachers and students.

Thank you for your consideration,

Allison MacLeod



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