
From: tlcleveland [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 5:33 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill 75-
Attachments: Bill 75- Tammy Waldron.docx

To Mr. Gordon Hebb:

I am sending you a written statement that I hope can be included in the Law Amendments Committee reading of Bill 75 (the imposed contract legislation for teachers). My name is Tammy Waldron, I am a teacher in Yarmouth, and as such, will be unable to present in person but I hope the letter I have written can be shared. I am attaching my statement to this email.

With sincere thanks,

Tammy Waldron

Submission to Nova Scotia Law Amendments Committee regarding Bill 75

By Tammy Waldron, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

As the Legislative Assembly gets ready to pass Bill 75, I hope you will reflect on the consequences of passing this bill. I, myself, have been reflecting on how teaching has changed over the course of my career (I am in my 10th year of teaching), about the events of the past few months, and reflecting on why is it that teachers have voted in increasingly higher numbers against each collective agreement that has been presented to them. I want to start by sharing with you some of the changes implemented during my relatively short career that have angered and frustrated many teachers (Many of which were implemented by current Education Minister Karen Casey when she was in the same position, but as a Progressive Conservative):

- Powerteacher
 - Having to immediately put in attendance and lates so parents are able to see “live” if their kids aren’t there, which in theory is a good idea. Personally, I have no problem with the attendance aspect, but the lates are a problem. So many kids come in late, that in order to put them in in “live time” would require me to stop teaching every 5 minutes or so in order to record late students. The other option is just to not put them in and wait till the end of class which means parents call or email about their child’s unexcused absence, which means replying, which means more of my time taken away from teaching, grading and planning

- Gradebook
 - Having to upload each assignment, providing descriptions for each assignment and tying them to course outcomes shows a general mistrust as teachers to be able to do their jobs. Of course, the work we do is tied to the curriculum and meet outcomes; this seems to me to be another way for the government to monitor and have us prove we are doing our jobs.
 - Prescribed report card comments format requiring that comments have an “anchor” (a general statement of how the student is achieving), a strength, weakness and a way to improve- again, another way the government does not trust teachers. We should be allowed to write what we want to so we can give an accurate picture to parents/guardians of concerns we have about their child’s achievement
 - Work habits- boxes to be checked off about the student’s habits- includes responsibility, does class work and the like. None of the habits are specific. We are required on top of regular grading but also to keep records of observation of student work habits so we can fill in the table accurately. (More data keeping and entry!)

- Tienet
 - Tienet is used mainly for record-keeping regarding students with intellectual disabilities. Program Adaptations (PA) and Individual Program Plans (IPPs) are recorded here (More data entry). However, IPPs now must be done in a word document and then later transferred into the boxes after an IPP meeting is held

with the Program Planning Team and the parent/guardian. More data entry! Then IPP students get two report cards. One “regular” report card and another one that specifically goes through each outcome, and the student is graded on each one. In addition, we are then required to provide comments on how the student achieved their outcomes. Don’t forget that we had to fill in the other report card for the same student already in the gradebook.

- Inclusion

- Fewer Teacher Assistants (TA) and the ratio of students with high needs to the number of teaching assistants has increased from 1-1 to 1-5.
- 10 years ago I could expect to have 1 student with high needs in a class- today I can have 5 or more- this way, the government saves money by hiring fewer TAs
- The implementation of inclusion was based on the premise that when you have struggling students surrounded by high-achieving students, that the struggling students are helped by the influence and collaboration with the higher achieving students. Because of changing ratios due to cuts to TAs, there is no longer inclusion. It is back to streaming because students with high needs tend to be placed together to get the TA support.
- No resources- there are not any books offered by the DOE with related curriculum for students at the high school level for courses that are taught. For example, if I am teaching Political Science, where do I find related resources to the Political Science curriculum for a student at a grade 1 level? High school teachers spend a lot of time and money from their own pockets finding resources for their courses

that would be appropriate for elementary level students. It is made even more cumbersome because elementary resources have topics that are interesting for students at the P-6 level but that are too childish for high school students.

- Policies

- There are no consequences for students who do not attend classes regularly.
- Teachers are required to make alternate assessments for students who do not attend class regularly or who do not do their work in class (and there are A LOT who don't!)
- Teachers are required to create contracts for students who are not attending or doing their work to encourage them to do their work. 99% of the time after a teacher has made a contract like this and made up alternate work, the student STILL does not do the work
- Teachers are required to take late assignments and not allowed to give zeroes
- There are no consequences for students who show up to class late
- *Even though there is an Essential Graduation Learning (EGL) for citizenship, all of the above sends a message to students that showing up, being on time and doing your work are not important in life. WE ARE NOT TEACHING TODAY'S STUDENTS TO BE RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS AND THEY ARE ILL PREPARED FOR STUDY AT COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY AND THE WORKFORCE!*

- Programs
 - School Improvement Plan/ Continuous School Improvement
 - Teachers and administrators are responsible for collecting data about their schools and working to improve their school
 - Data is the key term here- teacher observations about what is needed is not sufficient. We are required to conduct surveys, collect data on everything from attendance to grades (focusing mainly on literacy and math.) Using the data, we have to make goals to improve the school. Then collect more data to prove that we are meeting the goals. Data, data, data!! Collect and inputting more data to prove we are doing our jobs.
 - At the same time, while we are collecting data, we are rarely given time to complete the work that is required. Every meeting we have, detailed notes must be recorded and submitted to the principal and the Board monitors that.
 - Professional Growth Plans
 - Teachers are required to submit to their principals and boards goals that show how we will improve our teaching each school year. In addition, we need to explain how we will meet the goals, and have data that shows we met our personal goals. Again, another tool to prove that we are doing our jobs.
 - Yearly Plans
 - At the beginning of the school year, we are required to give a plan to our principal showing what we plan to do each school day and what outcomes

each lesson will meet. Again, another thing involving immense time and paper work to prepare, and that doesn't consider that without knowing our students yet, that plans may change. It is just another tool used to make teachers prove we are doing our jobs.

- Standardized tests

- More and more standardized tests have been added, even though research shows that standardized tests do not improve learning for students. Standardized tests generally have biases that make it more difficult for students to achieve well on them. Then teachers are blamed when students struggle and do not do well. More standardized tests are added, leading to more stress and pressures for both students and teachers. Standardized tests, furthermore, are just a snapshot in time. They can never measure what a student truly knows or is capable of overall. They simply measure how a student is doing on a particular day and does not take into account many other factors that can affect a student's achievement (a fight with a parent on the way out the door to school, or a pet who has died, and the like.) Furthermore, teachers know which students are struggling before these tests even happen. These tests are not to improve student learning; they are to prove, again, to stakeholders outside of schools (government, the public) that teachers are doing their jobs.

- Collaborative Learning Teams
 - Teachers are divided into groups and are required to work on the School Improvement goals. However, the groups are categorized into Literacy, Math and School Climate. Teachers are assigned groups and the teams collect data to, (can you guess?) prove that teachers are doing their jobs.

These programs are just a sampling of initiatives put into place from the top down, usually at the beginning of the school year, with the expectation that teachers start doing these things immediately on top of their regular classroom duties. You have probably noticed that almost all of them focus mostly on data and paperwork that mainly requires a teacher to prove that they are doing their jobs, rather than simply letting us do our jobs! I ask the Liberal government, stop asking teachers to prove to you we are working and, instead, prove to us that you can be trusted.

The things I've noted here are just a few examples of things I have observed during my short ten year career. More seasoned teachers could probably add many more items to the above list. So, over the past 10 years there has been more and more added to teacher workloads, less accountability for students and less support for students with high needs (both intellectually and behaviourally.)

On top of all this, teachers are expected to take on extra-curricular activities for student benefit. However, over the past ten years, I have observed that students take less and less initiative in being leaders within school activities. Instead of students learning skills that will be of use to them later on in life when they transition to the workplace, teachers end up doing the bulk of the organizing. Students initiate ideas, but rarely follow through on making them happen.

Events get announced, students say they will organize them, and most of the time they don't. Then teachers step up to make things happen; this adds to the long list of responsibilities- leaving little time for lesson planning and marking. But teachers pick up the slack because they want to create opportunities for students to have the "extras" that will make their school years memorable outside of classroom learning. I believe the lack of student interest of following through is related very closely with the fact that our system has made students less accountable for their own learning and more dependent on adults.

Increased classroom sizes due to attrition, limited time during the day to prepare for classes, and less money for Community Services combine to make all of the above issues even worse. In a class of 30+ high school students, a teacher can expect multiple absences any given day, requiring them to make up multiple make-up assessments for students who have skipped classes. It is reasonable to give make up assignments for students who have legitimate reasons for missing school such as illness or a death in the family. But the bulk of absences are not legitimate (even though many parents and guardians believe they are.) Here is a list of reasons I have received for absences that parents/guardians have excused their child from class for (even on test days): getting a tattoo, getting a haircut, taking a vacation, because they are a "good" kid and deserve a day off, because the students decided it is a school-wide "skip day," and finally, because they are getting ready for the prom. Maybe I'm old fashioned, but these were never considered legitimate reasons to miss school when I was a student and I highly doubt any employer would want an employee who considered reasons such as these as legitimate excuses for missing work. But perhaps that is because as a teacher, I don't get "personal" days. Teachers get 20 sick days a year, to be used for sickness and can be required to provide a doctor's note for any sick day. Teachers do not get paid personal days so they can go to appointments, travel, stay

home with a sick child, or go to a funeral for a friend (bereavement days are only for family).

Teachers are expected to organize their appointments, travel, sick children and deaths of friends around the unpaid "vacations" they get during the school year.

In addition, when students do all attend a class, when there are more than 30 students in a class, there is not enough time to support all the students who need extra help. Classroom management becomes more of an issue with more students in the class. And technology such as smart phones makes engaging students a constant struggle. So many students are addicted to being on their phones, playing games, using social media and texting and there are no policies in place that give teachers any power to put a stop to students using their phones during class. Students need to learn when it is appropriate to use their smartphones- not during class lectures, class discussions or before their work is done. And teachers need the authority to take phones from students who are not using smart phones appropriately. How many employers would want an employee who was constantly using their smartphone and not doing their work? Teachers are being held back from teaching students how to be responsible adults because we have no policies to support us as authority figures. When teachers are unable to provide structure and discipline in a classroom, it is more difficult for us to do our jobs. Students have less and less respect for teachers now than they ever did; this is because the authority of teachers is being eroded by government policies that degrade teachers as professionals.

With the increased class sizes and increased demands on our workloads, our preparation time has remained the same and even decreased in some cases. When I began teaching, teachers who took on advisory roles in the larger committees such as Student Council and the Yearbook got an extra prep in order to do the extra work required for these very important extra-

curriculars. These preps have been taken away. So teachers are being asked to do more and more without being given any more time to do it in and very little in terms of resources and supplies.

At this point, I would like to ask each of you, how much do you spend out of your own pocket for the supplies needed to do your job? Have you ever had to spend out of your own pocket for pens or paper, for example? I have. And so has every other teacher in the province at one time or another. Our schools are so poorly funded that teachers use their own money for markers, tape, staplers, staples, paper clips, Bristol board, chart paper- name an office supply, and we have bought it out of our own pockets. Ever go to Staples in September and notice all the teachers picking up supplies for their classrooms? Did you know that teachers do not get reimbursed for those supplies? And unlike other jobs where people may have to buy their own supplies, teachers are not allowed to claim their classroom supplies on their taxes. And why do we do it? Because we care about our students, and we want to be able to provide them with the best education possible. If that means taking money out of our own pockets to make that happen, we will do it. But I ask, is it fair? Is it fair to expect the teachers of this province to pay for basic work supplies that should be provided? Do nurses have to pay for needles for their patients? Does Karen Casey or Stephen McNeil have to buy their own pens? This bill is another slap in the face for teachers who give so much of themselves to benefit the children of Nova Scotia, only for the government to turn around and take, take, take and cut, cut, cut.

Cuts in community services mean teachers are fundraising and organizing breakfast programs for students who come from homes where a good breakfast is not being provided, often due to social issues, mainly poverty. Mental health issues are on the rise, and many teachers are struggling to support students who suffer from anxiety and depression. While there seems to be no official numbers to support it, more and more teachers are also suffering from anxiety and

depression due to increased work demands. In my school alone, at least 10% of the staff were absent for extended periods of time last year due to mental health issues (including myself). And those are just the staff who were readily willing to share their struggles publicly. There were many more who told me in confidence that they too had either missed time for mental health issues or were taking drugs for anxiety and/or depression.

These are just some of the issues that teachers in this province are angry and frustrated about. Teachers have been feeling less and less supported by the Department of Education, parents and guardians, students and the general public. Over time, we have become more and more fed up. As our jobs have become more and more demanding, we feel that we have become less and less valued.

All of these pressures have been building up, leading to an explosion when the Liberals offered the Nova Scotia Teacher's Union the worst collective agreement in the history of the NSTU. True, the Liberals promised us tough financial decisions. But they promised teachers more. They promised to return the funds that the NDP had removed from education. They promised to improve teaching conditions and to hire more teachers. Many teachers voted for Stephen McNeil because they believed he would support teachers. Even though the Liberals claim that they kept all of their promises, it is difficult for teachers to believe it because we see no differences in our classrooms. What we have seen is more top-down initiatives given with short notice and more specialists- but more specialists are not what we need. Most teachers have never even met with a specialist. Teachers are highly educated; most of us have at least one Master's degree. We are professionals, but are not treated as such.

So when agreement number one was offered to teachers and voted on, the majority of teachers voted no to the contract, even though it was recommended by the union. Why? Because many of us voted Liberal expecting more from this government for education, and then we were offered the exact opposite. When contract number two was then also rejected by even a larger number of teachers, it was because teachers started talking to one another about their frustrations. We see money being wasted left and right on things like standardized tests, specialists and very little being invested on resources such as books and teachers in actual classrooms (a.k.a. NOT specialists.)

After two rejected tentative agreements, we were then asked to vote on whether or not we would strike. For the first time ever in Nova Scotia's history, our teachers voted to go on strike which took the form of work-to-rule. Many teachers finally realized how many extras they had been doing that were not actually required by our contracts but that we are expected to do by the government and the general public. We realized how much we'd been neglecting our own needs and our ability to be healthy because we had been working so hard for so long on top-down initiatives. While many of us are anxious for work-to-rule to end because it does provide extra stress and we do miss some of the extra-curriculars, we are more effective in the classroom since we are not bogged down with extra data-entry and paperwork. Finally, we are able to do our jobs, actually teach!

Teachers fought hard, demonstrated and we were hopeful when the government finally decided to go back to the table to negotiate a third agreement with our union. But during that time, the Liberals continued to break our trust by dishonoring media blackouts agreed upon by the government and the union, and basically engaging in a smear campaign against teachers. It is too easy for the government to do since the public perception of teachers is that we are overpaid

and have too much vacation time. There are a lot of people out there who don't know that teachers are not paid for the days we have off; our pay is pro-rated through the year. They don't know that teachers spend those unpaid breaks preparing lessons. They don't know how much money teachers pay for school supplies and books out of their own pockets because of how under-funded the education system is. However, we did see support from many parents and students which gave us a glimmer of hope that perhaps we could see a fair contract. And so a third attempt was made at negotiating a contract and our union told us, again, to accept the contract.

Teachers did not vote for the third contract because teachers do not trust the Liberal government to keep its promises. The events of the past few months have made teachers feel emboldened to stop suffering in silence and to finally stand up to years of abuse and lies by successive governments. Teachers are generally feeling that they have built momentum; the fear of the past of voting against our union's recommendations and the fear of going on strike has been overpowered by years of built-up frustration. The majority of Nova Scotia's teachers saw this most recent deal as an insult. Plus, we had fought this far; teachers were not going to give up so easily anymore.

Teachers in this province are no longer going to be complacent. We are standing up for our rights to be respected as professionals and, more importantly, we are standing up for the future of this province. What could be more important than the education of our children? Our children deserve better; they deserve updated books and healthy teachers. It's time for the government to stop claiming "poor" and pony up. The majority of the changes teachers want would save money, not cost money. Either give teachers raises and a service award so we can afford to buy the resources for students that the government refuses to fund or put the money

toward the needed resources so we can do our jobs. It's time for the government to stop using caring people who do a tough job every day because we care so much about our students as a way to fill in the cracks of a failing system. We can't take it anymore. We are fed up and broken and we are unable to fill all the cracks anymore. And we won't. The teachers of this province are finally standing up to the real bullies in Nova Scotia's education system.

Now Bill 75 has been introduced to legislate a contract on teachers. This bill is not about ending Work-to-Rule or returning to "normalcy" for the kids as the Stephen McNeil would like us to believe. This bill is about money. The Liberal government wants to keep all the perks of the unpaid work teachers do without adequately compensating teachers for that work. The Liberal government wants to continue to save money at the expense of students by keeping the status quo. For those of you planning to vote yes to Bill 75, I challenge you to think deeply and do some soul-searching. Many of you know teachers and have family members who are teachers. You know how much teachers invest in their students out of their own pockets, out of their time and from their hearts. On behalf of the people of Nova Scotia, I am asking you to invest in our students too by voting no to Bill 75. I implore you to respect the collective bargaining rights of teachers and make a fair deal with teachers. The teachers and students of this province deserve no less.