

Hello, I thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Angela Deagle. I am a teacher from Cape Breton. As a member of the Provincial Executive of the NSTU, I serve my members within the electoral riding of Inverness and Richmond/Cape Breton. Interestingly enough my members here are represented at both sides of the table, although from the talks I have been having, not for long! Already there is a commitment from teachers to seek additional candidates for other the parties for the next election as they have no intention of re-electing their current member votes in favour of Bill 75.

I am 54 years old. I tell my kids that I roamed the planet with the dinosaurs and sometimes, even I believe it. I have been involved in the education system of this province all of my life. My mother was a teacher, and somehow I became infected with whatever motivated her to go to school every day, love each and every one of her students as she did my 5 sisters and myself, and come home at the end of the day to continue to do her part with Brownies, Girl Guides, or whatever else the community asked of her.

She was, and continues to be, a very influential person in my life: she is a teacher, retired yet still committed to our cause. She was the one who first advised me to greet each child, offer a hug in the morning – it might be the only one they were offered that day – and always keep in mind that 20 years from now, they probably won't remember the lessons that I taught them; however, they would never forget how I made them feel. I still greet my kids, and I will admit, when they enter my class – my comfortable class filled with my books that I purchased because this system didn't see the value in providing funding (still waiting on an order from 2 years ago, or was it 3?) and my students are reading because that's what we do, we make it comfortable.

I substituted for 20 years before I received a contract. You see, certain people viewed me as too flexible to restrict me to one school, one grade, one class. And in hindsight, I'm ok with that because it allowed for me to raise my children, gather more knowledge and basically 'do my thing.' I always stated that I would never turn my back on any other teacher who might be confronted with the challenge of literally "refusing to cry" because students thought it might be funny to make their sub's day the worst of their life, or the teacher who has had a student slam a door on their arm in attempt to break it! Then I became involved in the NSTU and THANK GOD for that ... and then I think of the teachers who do not have the support group that I have found in my colleagues here today!

On one of my walls, I have a quote – and here I admit that I have several walls adorned with these painted quotes as the posters were deemed a fire hazard (go figure – cement buildings, and people are worried about a few posters that could potentially take them down) anyway.. the quote – "Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning how to dance in the rain." has become my mantra.

With all of the challenges that I have faced, with all of the conditions that have limited my teaching, with all of the preconceived notions about my professionalism –that I need to differentiate in a class with sometimes 4 to 5 levels so that I can reach each and every one, that I need to allow for choice and voice (ironically enough these have been stripped from us -what kind of lesson are we now teaching?), and that at the end of the day that I need several hundred teachers from across the province to identify the limitations/successes of my kids - to tell me what I already know, that I have to, and I get this... assess my students multiple times (each student 3 times per year – 98 students.. you do the math. And to do this I have to create an authentic activity and then

assess that as well so that students have immediate feedback) all so that I can inform my instruction.... and then, enter the data multiple times and on multiple platforms when I should be teaching, or at night when I should be a wife, mother, or even a community member.

I have tried, every day when I greet my students, to dance in the rain. But let me tell you, it is becoming more and more difficult. And I consider myself a veteran... how are the novice teachers managing to maneuver this? How are they able to manage the expectations of students, parents, employers, and the public while still juggling the lack of accountability – with no discipline, attendance, retention, or zero policies in place? Are our teachers fleeing domineering ‘parents’ who want to control every facet of their lives – to micro manage every moment of their work day as well as the countless volunteer hours built into their performance appraisals? Oh yes!

I just want to teach – I know what I am doing, and so do the young teachers – I don’t want to take any more time away from my kids. I don’t want to be sneaking away to complete data entry so that I can validate someone else’s job or improve the optics of the performance of students in this province when such basic ideas like: did they get enough sleep, did they have a breakfast, did they get a hug this morning? And those are just the external influences, what about all of the other things that they are struggling with every day that DO in turn affect their performance on a particular assessment day? I want to be with my kids, to catch that ah...ha... moment that I might otherwise miss because I am too focused on anything other than them.

And so I say, this system is broken. We are too concerned with how others perceive the notion of success in this province and too oblivious to what our next steps should be. AND I am sad, my heart is sad, every fibre of my being is sad that it would be suggested that I am, or ever was

a threat to my kids, that I would ever not have their best interests at heart. Teachers have been reasonable, our union has been reasonable, parents and students have both been reasonable – there is only one party left in the equation. It's time for you to be reasonable – for our sake, for the sake of every Nova Scotian, please be reasonable!

I have a teacher friend, who is also a parent and she desperately wanted to address this body. If I am allowed, I would like to share the email that she sent to me last night – she did attempt to have her name added to a speaker's list. She was unsuccessful.

Obviously my rights to be represented by my union to have a contract negotiated for me have been taken away. This government has never bargained in good faith, but has instead created a charade of seeming to bargain, all the while knowing that if what they really wanted could not be extorted from the NSTU, they would just gather their allies and force teachers into submission with legislation. I would like to think that somewhere in the government there are good people willing to stand up for the future of our education system. The system has been slowly eroded away over a number of years, and I see very little in this piece of legislation that is going to help our classrooms start to recover. This legislation takes from teachers and gives nothing in return. Teachers have proven for years that they are willing to make sacrifices for their students. And many would have probably continued to make personal sacrifices in terms of financial gains for themselves, if they could see that real investment was being made to benefit students. However, this legislation is not only a financial loss for teachers, but asks them to sacrifice the education their students deserve.