

Good Afternoon, my name is Lori Walton, I am the National Vice President for Government Services Union with the Public Service Alliance of Canada and I am a member of the Nova Scotia Parents for Teachers Steering Committee... but most importantly I am here as a single mother of two intelligent daughters.

My youngest daughter is 12 years old and is in Grade 7 at Fairview Junior High School. My eldest is 21 and has completed her post-secondary schooling. With the 9 year difference between my children I have seen a change in the education system.

9 years ago, there was no power school.

9 years ago classroom sizes seemed smaller.

9 years ago, teachers were freer to teach.

And as a parent, I didn't think too much of it. Like most Nova Scotians I was blissfully unaware of any contract dispute between teachers and the province.

In October the Nova Scotia Teachers Union held a strike vote and **100%** of teachers showed up for that vote. What most notable about that vote is that **96%** of all teachers believed there were enough problems that were unaddressed that they would be willing to STRIKE.

The teachers said no. The teachers were willing to walk over the problems with our education system. The teachers were willing **to risk their own job stability** in order to make classrooms better for **my daughter**.

This action, this vote, is what woke me up. The teachers have yelled **MAYDAY**.

Teachers not only teach our children reading, writing and arithmetic, but they teach them fundamental skills, such as compassion, team building and how to be a good citizen.

Now we find ourselves standing before this Liberal government who chooses to 'balance the budget' on the backs of our children. I for one will not stand idly by and let this happen. Not only have I woke up, but I have risen up and I have spoken up. I will continue to oppose any government that expects me to be silent while they destroy our future... all to look 'fiscally responsible'.

This is the first time in the history of Nova Scotia that teachers will be going out on a province wide strike. And I'm not sure that you have noticed or not, but Nova Scotians are solidly in behind the teachers on this one. Have you seen the numbers of dedicated parents, grandparents and students that are coming out to the rallies? That are posting on social media? That are risking our safety in blizzards and snowstorms to show our support for the teachers?

All because MacNeil and Casey have decided to put forward this Harperesque anti-union Bill 75 that will take away the teachers democratic labour rights to be able to negotiate a fair and meaningful contract that addresses their needs.

Like it or not this is labour dispute will be one that is marked in our history books due to the unprecedented events and support that have taken place within this dispute.

I believe politics is also a calling. Ultimately you become a politician to try to make change and try to better the lives of the constituents you represent. Sometimes, like we are seeing now, you lose your way. You get so far removed from the roots of why you got involved in the first place, and you start towing the party line.

So in the words of Florence Reese's 1931 poem I ask you... **Don't listen to their lies. Us poor folks haven't got a chance, Unless we organize! Which side are you on?**

As a National Vice President of Government Services Union with the Public Service Alliance of Canada we have seen in the past on the Federal Government level, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper try to put similar legislation through to take away our bargaining rights. Thankfully we ousted Harper and replaced him with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (a former teacher I might add) has been more reasonable and has started to restore the bargaining rights that the Harper government tried to rip away.

To quote the famous Martin Niemoller poem:

They came for the Communists, and I didn't object

– For I wasn't a Communist;

They came for the Socialists, and I didn't object

– For I wasn't a Socialist;

They came for the labor leaders, and I didn't object

– For I wasn't a labor leader;

They came for the Jews, and I didn't object

– For I wasn't a Jew;

Then they came for me

– And there was no one left to object.

Or as more commonly known in Nova Scotia... they have come for the doctors, we were silent. They came for the nurses again we were silent. They came for the civil servants, we were silent. Then they came for the teachers... we will no longer be silent!!

I implore you all to reconsider your support for this bill. Take your heads out of the sand and vote no, it is what is best for our children, and for the future of our province.