

February 15, 2017

Attn: Law Amendments Committee RE: Bill 75

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing this letter in place of speaking in front of the Law Amendments Committee this evening. I wish to respectfully express my strong opposition to Bill 75. Fundamentally, it is wrong for government to impose a contract on workers. This is exacerbated by the fact that the government has chosen to describe the bargaining process as "fair" and "in good faith". This is inaccurate. These negotiations were done under the threat of Bill 148. Teachers were urged by their union to accept contracts because they believed rejection would lead to the enactment of Bill 148, ultimately affecting other public sector workers in the province. In short, the contracts were recommended because our union leadership was afraid of what might happen if we didn't accept them. The current situation with Bill 75 is the enactment of one of these threats. The question I would like to pose to the committee is, "In what way does this meet the criteria of fair bargaining, in good faith?"

As a teacher, I am hoping to see concrete supports and strategies to support the needs of our diverse student population incorporated into a new contract. There was little in any of the tentative agreements to help students and teachers in classrooms now. I am skeptical about the committees designed to address this issue. Will they affect change? Or will the result be more money spent on talking about problems. It is possible for the government to invest money in additional teachers and supports for students who struggle. With appropriate help (human resources), many young people who are not currently succeeding in school will be able to. Money invested in education is money invested in the future. Success in school prevents many at risk youth from going down destructive life paths. By providing them with the help they need we are setting them up to become contributing members of society. Eventually this will save money for the system, while providing a fulfilling life for many individuals. By refusing to make needed investments in education, the government is preventing some children from reaching their full potential.

Money. Dare I say the word. It has been widely circulated that this is not about money. And I agree that it is not the whole story. However, I also believe that teachers who dedicate their lives to educating our children have the right to fair a compensation package. The fairness of this package is limited to the fact that it will be imposed on everyone else who still has to negotiate a contract. The salary gains contained within Bill 75 and the freezing of the long service award are insulting. It is shocking and disappointing that any government would be so intent on taking away already negotiated benefits.

There are three areas of contention in this dispute: the blatant disregard for the rights of unions to negotiate a fair deal, changes to help students and teachers in our classrooms, and the compensation issue. Government did not address any of these in a concrete way. If I had believed that there was willingness to move on any one of these issues, in any one of the tentative agreements, I would have accepted it.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely

Jill Kimberley