
From: gmfinlayson [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 10:23 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: re:Law Amendments Nova Scotia Teachers

I would like to first address the fact that I am a circuit teacher, I teach at 2 schools everyday, I have 8 classes total. Last year and this year due to being a circuit teacher with 8 classes, my prep time is the minimum allowed and tied in with my recess and travel time. I know this is the situation for many circuit teachers- band, music, physical education and Core French teachers. It is impossible to get any prep work done for inclusive classrooms with such minimal time. Bill 75 does not seem to address this long ongoing problem.

Secondly because I travel between 2 different schools, 8 different classes I would like to share some stories to further paint the inclusive classroom picture and the fact that bill 75 is not going to help nor any of the 3 TA contracts. In all 8 classes, 2 schools and my previous circuit as well, the class sizes are not only too big (some with 28 students), its whats in those numbers that make it a problem. There are 5 different educational levels of abilities of students. There are students with major behavior problems, students with major anxiety problems and lets not forget about our huge ESL number of students and refugee children that were just thrown in the mix and told they will "pick it up". Do you know last year when the refugees arrived , I was told to use an ipad to help translate for the students. I teach core french; and if you know the new curriculum then you would know it is a conversation class, entirely in French. Taking the time to pull out an ipad and try to use an app for the large number of ESL students takes away from all students learning. They are then focusing on their first language and not French and it offsets my class. I have been told to get other students to translate , which again means taking their learning time to become an Interpreter for new ESL students. I have students with major behavior problems but the system in place is not working for them and the concerns need to be shared by teachers, who know the students and care about the students. I have students with disabilities that sit in my class without EPAs because they are spread thin amongst the huge numbers of students that are in need of support.

In the Fall, as most of my lunch hours, 2 students came to my class , needing a break from lunchtime peers and activities. I welcome them into my class. They are from Syria. I have come to know them quite as well as they often come to visit but today's lunch hour was very different. One of the little girls begins to explain to me the following story; "My Dad he is just so sad because they shot my Grandma in the head." My jaw dropped and she explained she saw it all. She said to me, "you remember when I told you how the bomb dropped on my house and my mom ran and lost her baby.." (I nod).. she said the house fell on my leg. Someone took me to the hospital but I did not see my Mother for many days. " I replied "But your Mother is here, how did she find you?" She then explained they put pictures up all over the town and after many days her Mother came to get her from the hospital. I looked at her friend with empathy who told me that she left the country before this happened so she never had to see any of this. The other little girl continued "Miss, the school alarm went off and we all ran and them BOOM, they dropped a bomb on our school". At this point they ask to play a song on youtube and I allow them. It was a Syrian refugee girl, about age 8 singing a song in Arabic. The little girl begins to cry so I ask her friend what is going on, what is this song about. She explains it is about Syria, and the girl singing is saying give me back my country. AT this point, I no longer felt like the struggling teacher, happy to give these refugees a safe haven and a new life. I felt like a struggling teacher, that was not a counselor, with no background to deal with this situation I was living at this very moment. I realized how much the system is failing these war-stricken children. This little girl arrived with a smile, all last Spring she seemed so happy and right now, in my class she was showing me how much more help she needed. She was picking up English but she was not getting any help or support to deal with what she escaped. I obviously went to my administration to ask what to do, and they said they were asking the same questions. We have not yet received an answer 5 months later. I am asking you today, how does bill 75 plan to support behavior students, anxious students, classrooms with 5 level of academic abilities, ESL students and refugees? As a teacher, I can educate, I can plan brilliant lessons but I am not equipped to deal with a class of 28 students of severe behaviors, anxiety,