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To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
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Subject: Submission to Law Amendments

Feb. 16th, 2017

Submission to Law Amendments

From: Susan Zurawski
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I am a teacher for an Extended Program Support Class that works specifically with students who face significant challenges. I consider it a privilege and an honour to help guide my students forward in meeting their full potential, as do all teachers.

- It has been my CHOICE to work through break times and many lunch hours as well in order to facilitate the support needed for our students and to make sure that our fantastic Educational Assistants also get their needed and legally binding break times.
- It has been my CHOICE to buy materials for lesson activities and for incentives and just for pure fun out of my own pocket.
- It has been my CHOICE to further my education with my own time and money to find ways to reach and teach.
- It has been my own CHOICE to prepare Professional Development talks for our staff about Best Practices for Inclusion.
- It has been my CHOICE to prepare talks for our October conferences about Inclusion tactics for the Association for Teacher of Exceptional Children.
- It has been my CHOICE to work evenings and weekends preparing lesson plans that will appeal to my students and to make their Individual Learning Outcomes fun and engaging.
- It has been my CHOICE to work evenings and weekends preparing Individual Program Plans for the year and the 3 term reports that go with that.
- It has been my CHOICE to meet with parents after school to discuss concerns.

FINALLY:

- It has been my CHOICE to become a teacher and never think twice about going above and beyond my contract for my students.

These are all things that are not in our contract. When teachers chose to protest a contract that did not represent our needs, a contract that was not done in good faith and without fair bargaining, we decided on Work to Rule for two main reasons. Number one and foremost, was to put STUDENTS FIRST. To make sure that all outcomes were being addressed and that the needs and safety of all our students were always looked after. Number two was to show the public and our government all the things that teachers do everyday that are above and beyond our contractual duties. The McNeil government now claims that THEY are the ones putting students first. This is right out of Donald Trump's tactics of "ALTERNATIVE TRUTH". Nothing could be further from the truth. The McNeil Government locked out students back in October. That not only punished students, but was made to show teachers how much power and muscle they have over teachers. How sad. How disrespectful. How uncommunicative.

Premier McNeil keeps telling the media that the union walked away from the table 3 times. The trouble is, the "TABLE" was never really there. It was always pre-loaded with unacceptable conditions and a threat that not accepting this would result in even more losses for teachers. It was draconian and insulting to our professionalism. You don't enter into bargaining with threats hanging overhead.

Premier McNeil has also been throwing a lot of money costs out to the media. These are fabricated and inflated numbers that he proposed from solutions that weren't even asked for or are even feasible. For example, the astronomical cost he put to the media for helping teachers with photocopy time was based on his assumption that every school would have to hire three full time people to do this work and then he gave out a cost over a five year period. This was just plain fabrication and another example of dishonest tactics to confuse the public about teacher demands.

I voted NO against the last contract negotiation NOT because of money, this is the least of my worries. I voted against the contract because it does not acknowledge the immediate needs of support for teachers. It does not put a firm cap on class size restriction. It does not address problems in our education system effectively nor does it have any permanent solutions. It does not address the ineffective and time consuming data collecting methods that are imposed upon teachers. It does not offer democratic solution, but rather treats teachers with a dictatorial hammer that falsely accuses teachers of not caring about their students and takes away rights that the Teachers Union has fought hard for over the years. Things like our Service Plan fro retiring teachers. That was put in place when we lost our cost of living increase for pensions. Now that too is being taken from teachers. The list goes on.

This McNeil Government comes across as a dictatorship that belittles my professionalism as a teacher/educator. Schools and classrooms across Canada and many other professions have adopted, in recent years, the Restorative Justice Approach. It's something out Premier could learn from. Seating is done in a circle that encompasses everyone, leaving no one above, behind or excluded in anyway. Every member of the circle is given an opportunity to express themselves. Every problem is viewed from all perspectives. Solutions are a group decision. Every member of the circle is empowered as a valuable participant. Decisions are made with equal communication opportunities, not lored down from any individual. If the bargaining table had been a true circle of fairness, without pre-conditions, without power being wielded over it and with a true voice made available for each member, I believe that a solution could have been easily made. Our union was invited to an ambush bargaining table and then a finger pointed at them for refusing to walk into that trap. This is very sad and very difficult for all teachers, who love and are proud of their profession. It's also difficult for the public to understand as reports made by the Provincial Liberals are misleading with incomplete information and wrong emphasis on the real issues that teachers have with the proposed contracts. The real issues are respect for our rights, respect for work place conditions, respect for the pay scale that the union has worked hard for over the years, and respect for fair bargaining.

Please come back to a fresh, clean, unconditional round table where everyone is equal, listened to, considered and treated with respect.

With hope for reconciliation and FAIR bargaining,

Susan Zurawski
EPS Teacher
M.ed