

Good morning/afternoon/evening, and thank for you the opportunity to be allowed to speak with you today.

My name is Joanne Treen, and I am a resident of the Hammonds Plains-Lucasville riding. I am the mother of two school aged children, and I am a full-time Primary teacher at Sycamore Lane Elementary School in Lower Sackville.

On February 11, a news release from the Premier announced that the government planned to recall the House of Assembly for an emergency session to table legislation to bring an end to the dispute between the government and Nova Scotia's teachers – an emergency – what was the emergency? Well, in the Premier's words he said, "we must bring an end to this dispute so the lives of students and parents can return to normal."

How did we get to this point?

You may or may not be aware, that the government reached three different agreements with 2 different union negotiating teams. This – in the Premier's opinion – signals the end of collective bargaining. Because he says so, not because it needs to be so. You either support the process or you don't. In 2013, shortly before he was elected Premier, The Honourable Stephen McNeil said, "We support the collective bargaining process and the right to strike and will continue to do so." It has become abundantly clear that he no longer feels this way. Because the Liberals happen to hold a majority position in the House the Premier believe that gives him the right to violate the collective bargaining rights of Nova Scotia's teachers.

During those negotiating sessions, when the government reached three different agreements with 2 different union negotiating teams – see I can do it too – there was

very little actual negotiating being done. The Premier said – and I quote – “each time we moved on our position.” In December, 2015, 61% of teachers rejected the first agreement, in October, 2016, 70% of teachers rejected the second agreement, and last week, 78.5% of teachers rejected the third agreement – it’s clear that the government was moving in the wrong direction. The Union’s negotiating team had one job – to bring back the best possible deal to the membership, so the membership could vote whether to accept or reject. It’s clear that the teachers of Nova Scotia do NOT accept what the government has offered so far. The Honourable Karen Casey has said about the proposed contract – and I quote – “this piece of legislation is a true reflection of what teachers have told us were their concerns in the classroom...we respect what teachers are asking for.” If my memory serves me correct, 78.5% of teachers rejected the government’s last contract offer? The proposed contract does not come close to sufficiently addressing the issues surrounding our concerns, which is why the 3 previous offers were rejected.

Despite the promise of class caps in Grades P-6, there is a caveat of “flexibility” attached which means that they never have to be respected. Class caps are only applicable up to September 30th, and only if space allows. Class caps need to be concrete, inflexible, and built into the contract for all grade levels. An immediate solution that could be implemented today would see a long-term substitute teachers to be placed in every classroom that is over cap, and remain there until the class drops below cap. The student/teacher ratio would drop by half – students could have the opportunity for the in-class support they’re so desperately needing, and would rely less on extra help/tutoring/etc. Class caps need to respect the diversity of the learning needs in the classroom. It is not uncommon to have children working at up to 5-6 different grade levels within one classroom. 25-50% of students require adaptations or are on an individual program. Teachers teaching combined grades at the elementary level have 2

curricula to deliver, yet have the same class cap as those with only 1 grade. Junior and senior high classes often number in the 30's and 40's – and we're wondering why so many of them rely on teachers to voluntarily give extra help for them to be successful. Article 20 of the New Brunswick Teachers' Federation Contract has very specific restrictions on class sizes, including lower class caps for combined classes. Their contract states: "at no time after the beginning of the school year shall teachers or the Employer agree to go beyond the indicated class size numbers." Does our government not realize the impact out-of-control class size has on students' learning conditions? Well, apparently they do, but are unwilling to act. On Tuesday, the Honourable Karen Casey said, "as funds allow we will move that cap beyond Grade 6 into Grade 7, up to Grade 12." As funds allow? You are admitting that changes need to be made, yet you are still unwilling to do what is necessary to make it happen. A court decision last November ruled that a law imposed by the B.C. government that blocked teachers' ability from bargaining class sizes was unconstitutional. The government announced last month that it would be funding the hiring of 1,100 new teachers in an agreement with the B.C. Teachers' Federation. Is that what you're waiting for? To be forced by a court into doing what is right?

Yesterday, the Honourable Karen Casey said, "there is no no-fail policy – there absolutely is not." I would like to draw your attention to the following document entitled "Individual Program Plan (IPP) Review." This document was published by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education in February, 2016. It reads – and I quote – "All teachers have a duty to use practices that help their students achieve the outcomes of the public school program." It goes on to say, "Students may need adaptations to help them achieve the outcomes. Adaptations are strategies and or/resources to accommodate the learning needs of an individual student." And furthermore, "For some students, the provincial learning outcomes may not be

applicable or achievable, even with adaptations. In that case, the student's program planning team works collaboratively to develop an individual program plan (IPP). An IPP changes the prescribed outcomes and/or adds new outcomes for the student." This is the no-fail policy. This is the policy that has been set by the government that dictates exactly how we are supposed to support children who are unable to meet the outcomes of the Public School Program. Under this scheme, retention is not an option.

Our schools are in a desperate state. We are desperate for resources – physical resources and human resources – human resources to work directly with students. EPAs – Students with diagnosed special needs like autism or Down Syndrome no longer qualify for full day EPA coverage, even though they attend school for a full day. There is a desperate lack of behaviour specialists, school psychologists, speech & language pathologists, mental health specialists, social workers. Students in crisis can often wait weeks or months for support to arrive, prolonging their own treatment and recovery and causing incredible havoc, anxiety, and often physical and emotional harm to the students and staff around them.

The proposed contract includes the Government's plan to create a Council to Improve Classroom Conditions and a Commission on Inclusive Education. We've already seen all too well how effective the Government's previous time and money was spent when the "Report of the Minister's Panel on Education" was released. Teachers made it clear that the students' learning conditions were being negatively impacted by the following:

- Workload too high, too much paperwork
- Disruptive student behavior
- Too many new initiatives
- A system too standardized

- Too many outcomes and not enough resources
- Social promotion
- Too few supports for students with special needs
- Too many adaptations and IPPs
- Class composition

The Minister's response was, "There is a call for the province to develop a new performance management system that mandates accountability for the quality of instruction received by students and the learning that occurs." Rather than dealing with the problems that teachers identified, she decided to develop and roll out a new initiative that would create a "robust system for teacher performance management" and to strengthen "the process for addressing poor teaching performance." This government has said that "teachers have told us their concerns in the classroom." We've been saying it over and over again, and no one seems to be listening. There is absolutely no reason to believe that this time it will be any different.

On Tuesday, the Honourable Karen Casey justified the imposed legislation by stating that there was – and I quote – "disruption in the classroom that's hurting kids." What disruption is she referring to? The disruption brought on by Work to Rule? How exactly does she think Work to Rule has caused a disruption in the classroom? During Work to Rule teachers adhered to the conditions of the Teachers' Provincial Agreement and the Education Act relating to planning, preparing and delivering lessons to students. In order to do this, we withdrew the extras – there would be no lunch supervision, extra help or extra-curricular activities, no clubs, no coaching, no concerts, etc. None of these extras are required in the Teachers' Provincial Agreement. They were, and will remain optional even when Work to Rule ends. None of these were disruptions in our classrooms, or hurt kids. Maybe the disruptions were related to the things from the Agreement or the Education Act that we weren't doing – things that we deemed to be

too time consuming and did NOT directly relate to planning, preparing or delivering lessons to students – attending staff meetings, collecting data, administering provincial assessments, attending mandated board or provincial PD, entering grades, attendance, and tracking behaviour incidents into PowerSchool, refusing to take student teachers – we knew we were breaking our contract, but none of these things had any direct impact in the classroom – it certainly wasn't disruptive or hurting children. In fact, my experience – and that of many of my colleagues – has been that during Work to Rule we have had far more time to spend planning, preparing, and delivering high-quality instruction for our students because we have had much fewer distractions and have been able to concentrate on what we know is most important – teaching.

So what is the emergency here? Is the emergency the need to "return to normal" that the Premier is referring to? Does being on Work to Rule constitute an emergency? I would like to ask the Speaker of the house, the Honourable Kevin Murphy, what are the criteria for deeming a situation to be an emergency, and did this request meet those criteria when he granted the Premier's request, and deemed this to be an emergency? Is the "normal" the Premier is referring to a pre-Work to Rule normal? Teachers will be forced to return to endless meetings, data collection, standardized testing, school improvement plans – all things driven by entities outside of our classroom, and all of which have NOTHING do with our primary focus – which is to plan for, prepare, and deliver high-quality instruction to our students.

My final words today are directed to the members of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party who are seated in front of me today, and in particular – Mr. Ben Jessome, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville who represents me and my family. Mr. Jessome – In 2013, I chose you above the other candidates in our riding because I believed you when you said you would represent me, my family, and my community. I

voted for you, and now it's time for you to vote for me. You do not work for the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, you work for the people of Hammonds Plains-Lucasville. You seem to have forgotten this. You have ignored my messages and emails. I feel strongly that if you support this bill and allow the collective bargaining rights of the people of Nova Scotia to be violated in this way, that you have done a grave disservice to the people you are supposed to be representing. I chose you to represent me and from what I've seen so far – you're not doing your job. In 2011, The Honourable Karen Casey crossed the floor, leaving the Progressive Conservative Party to join the Liberals and said that she first began considering the move after the Liberals tried to force emergency debate in the legislature over proposed cuts to education. You have a chance here – and I see it as your only chance to make a real difference, and the only option you have to remain in politics. Your only option is to cross the floor, as Minister Casey did in 2011. If you do not – you will not only be letting down me and the people of Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, but I will make it my personal mission to ensure that you are not re-elected. Matt Whitman, when this is over – if Mr. Jessome does not change his vote – give me a call.