
From: Dartmouth High School Physics [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 9:59 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Law Ammendments - Bill 75

Good day,

My name is Shane MacLeod; I am a parent of one child in grade 1 and another who will start primary in September 2018. I have nothing but great things to say about the education my daughter is receiving and, until recently, had no doubts that my son would have the same experience. However, I am also a teacher and I know that the reason my daughter has had such a great experience so far is because of the dedication and selflessness of her teachers and others who support education in our province.

I am concerned for both my daughter's and son's experiences going forward because one does not ensure success by imposing a contract on teachers and therefore telling them that all of the time they've invested going above and beyond is not appreciated. Instead this will ensure that teachers give less of their time and the quality of education will decline.

There are major issues within the system which did not develop overnight and cannot be fixed immediately. However, there are many items that could have been addressed with little or no cost to the province but instead there will be a committee, which may prove valuable but is a longer term item versus many things that could have been implemented immediately and resulted in improved learning conditions in our schools.

Things such as SSP initiatives have become a primary focus in many schools and drive the focus on professional development days, department and staff meetings. In the years we have been doing this, under a variety of acronyms, I have seen very little reward but it has pulled teachers away from the classroom. The loss of focus and continuity for something that provides little tangible benefit to students is an easy item to remove from teachers and allow them to focus their energy on classrooms. Not only does this allow focus on classrooms, it also allows professional development days to be returned to serve the needs of the school instead of being driven by SSP.

Another element that could be consider is Professional Learning Communities; these have been mandated in many schools and while the idea is sound, the implementation is poor and very few teachers I have spoken to have found a meaningful return on the time invested. In my school are required to given up 75 minutes at lunch a week in order to meet in departmental PLC's and, with little leadership or guidance, these sessions rarely provide any benefit to the classroom and simply take time away that could be used to prepare for class. The removal of these during the work to rule campaign was probably the single biggest relief for me as I could instead use that time to eat, mark or prep as required.

These are only two examples of things that could improve conditions for students in our classrooms but they are indicative of the larger issue with the system. The number of initiatives that have been implemented in my career are countless; each one has added to teacher workload, very few have been followed through with or supported in a meaningful way and very few have had the demands removed from teachers when the next initiative was introduced. Further, many of these are simply flavour of the day initiatives and have not been well designed, evidence-based programs that are known to improve the systems in which they are implemented.

As has been spoken to several times, real, hard classroom caps is one important step that can be taken to improve classroom conditions. The soft caps are insufficient and the fact that caps have been implemented in

elementary seems to have resulted in larger classes at the high school level. It has not been uncommon to have classes over 35; in the past two years, 50% of my classes have had an enrollment over 35 despite the fact that the laboratory I use for part of my course delivery has supplies for only 28 students.

I have voted against all three tentative agreements; while there are many reasons for why teachers voted against the agreements but the primary reason I voted against all three is twofold. First, none of them involved good faith bargaining; in all three contracts, there was legislation or the threat of legislation hanging over the heads of teachers. Second, the first two agreements did nothing to improve classroom conditions for my children or my students. While the third agreement did include some inroads, the fact is after what I have witnessed from the government in their time in power, including an apparent attack on unions, a lack of meaningful reform to education despite the chance to do so and a constant cry of listening to teachers despite all evidence to the contrary, I simply do not trust the government to follow through on its promises.

Finally, the with this legislation, the government has again demonstrated that it does not respect its employees; the fact that wages were rolled back to the initial tentative agreements can be seen as nothing more than punishment for not falling in line and accepting an agreement. The imposed contract is the government's admission that they are unwilling to use all of the means of resolution at hand including a conciliation board, mediation or binding arbitration. If, has been stated several times, the government's offer is fair, any or all of these should be considered before we are hit with a legislative hammer. One that will no doubt result in a court challenge that, regardless of outcome, will cost both sides and result in more bad feelings when both sides return to the bargaining table following this contract.

One does not build up the education system by tearing down teachers; thank you for taking the time to consider my submission,

Shane