

February 16, 2017

Re: Bill 75, Teacher's Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements Act.

Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

I would like to have delivered my submission in person but weather conditions today make that impossible.

My name is Michael Oddy and I am a high school teacher with the HRSB. I have been teaching for a long time, starting out in southern Ontario, then at a First Nations school in northern Quebec, as a volunteer teacher overseas and most recently (since 1998) in Nova Scotia.

Let me begin with a question: How many of you have been called a "fucking dick" to your face recently? I know as politicians you are aware some constituents may make some comments similar to this but it's usually behind your backs. Of course, online abuse especially of female politicians is rampant but again it is usually not made to the person's face.

I (and many other teachers) have been on the receiving end of this kind of aggression for asking a student to put their cell phone down and to please pay attention to what we are doing in class. Now you probably think I'm calling for more firm discipline in the classroom but you would be wrong. The student who says something like this has a combination of behavioural and mental health issues and I as a teacher have no resources to support this student other than to send him to the Vice Principal's office. They do their best trying to calm the situation and they are usually overwhelmed trying to keep up with all the mental health issues students are presenting.

Simply put we have a mental health crisis and schools do not have the resources to handle it.

Perhaps you heard of the study released today about people with ADHD and how there is new research suggesting brain differences:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/adhd-brain-structures-1.3983919>

How are teachers supposed to deal with this?

Back to my student: When he returned 20 minutes later he was calm because he had self-medicated by smoking a joint. Again, we have no resources to help with his addiction.

McNeil has been saying that Nova Scotia can't afford to solve the problems in N.S. schools because we have no money. But that isn't true. We could be borrowing money from the Bank of Canada, which has as its mandate to fund important public projects and infrastructure at very low interest rates. There is currently is a court case winding its way to the Supreme court

that if successful would require governments in Canada to honour the original intent of the Bank's mandate, but even without a successful decision the governments COULD be doing this. As an aside, the U.S. state of North Dakota largely funds its infrastructure from its own Bank of North Dakota and the democratic candidate for governor in New Jersey is talking about creating a publicly owned Bank of New Jersey to fund projects there.

Here's an interview on Amanda Lang's CBC program *The Exchange* that explains the court case:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/rocco-galati-challenges-bank-of-canada-to-offer-interest-free-loans-1.3065650>

And there's this opinion piece from the [Tye.ca](http://thetyee.ca):

<https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2015/04/17/Liberate-Bank-of-Canada/>

As the Lang interview reveals, the provinces could borrow from the Bank of Canada at very low interest rates, and McNeil could fund the much needed programs/ teachers/ assistants required to improve the education system.

Sincerely,

Michael Oddy
High School Teacher, HRSB