

February 16, 2017

Members of the Nova Scotia Law Amendments Committee

Re: Bill 75

I want to begin by saying that I have never appeared before any legislative committee of this House. The reason I am here today is because I believe that a grave miscarriage of justice is knowingly being carried out by the Liberal Government.

I want to remind Members of this House that democratic principles must never be sacrificed and that it is their solemn duty to uphold them.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and freedoms guarantees that every working person in our country has the democratic right to gather collectively and participate in free and full collective bargaining with their employer. Collective bargaining does not include pre-existing conditions and time limits. It is a process of back and forth and give and take. When an impasse happens between parties their disputes are handled by the arbitration process.

Governments are no different than any other employer and must abide by this same process. Premier McNeil thinks that collective bargaining is like a baseball game, three strikes and you are out. Educators know that collective bargaining is a process, just like education itself, and that it often takes much longer than three tries to be successful. The negotiations between the NSTU and the government were not successful because Premier McNeil never intended them to be. From the get go he had one plan, one agenda which was to impose Bill 148. Premier McNeil never had any intention of bargaining in good faith, his strategy was always to legislate. As NSTU President Liette Doucet has stated the Government wanted us to negotiate with our hands tied behind our back.

There is no need for Bill 75. It is totally unnecessary. There is no school emergency, no crisis; our students are being educated in their classrooms. This Bill is a total sham. In my opinion, this Bill is an abuse of power and a direct assault on the democratic rights of hardworking, honest teachers to participate in collective bargaining. This Bill is a complete violation of Teacher's civil rights.

I believe that this unconstitutional legislation will be over turned in the courts as it was in both Ontario and British Columbia. I urge the government members of the legislature to vote no to this unnecessary legislation and avoid a lengthy and expensive court challenge that will ultimately be overturned and result in tremendous cost to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia.

Members of the legislative assembly, do the right thing and stand up for democratic principles, and vote **NO**.

Sharon O'Connor