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**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Subject:** Law amendments bill 75

### Let's See If They Can Do the Impossible

Three years ago, in 2014, the Liberal government knew exactly what the problems were. They had commissioned a study on Nova Scotia's education system. The result was a report known affectionately as "The Freeman Report." Teachers told the government exactly what was wrong: they were being asked to do a job that was impossible. The government did not listen. In the report, teachers identified a number of things that were making it impossible for them "to be the kinds of teachers they want to be" (PAGE 26 – The Freeman Report)

- 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 • And the largest challenge: class composition

Sound familiar? All of these things were identified as factors "that contribute in significant ways to teachers' abilities to teach to standards that they hold for themselves and students." (PAGE 26 – The Freeman Report)

Rather than listening to teachers, the Panel listened to Nova Scotians who also shared their views:

"the system needs to do a much better job of dealing with poor performance. 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..." (PAGE 27 – The Freeman Report)

As a result of the report, Education Minister, Karen Casey, outlined the changes she had planned in Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education (2015). Granted, there are many suggestions in the plan, but over the last two years, including throughout 18 months of negotiations, and in the legislation we see before us today, she listened to the public, and not the teachers. 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." (PAGE 17 - Action Plan for Education)

Now, I do agree that having a set of standards for teachers to work towards is a good idea, but we already have one. However, in 2014, teachers told the government exactly what the problems were: they were trying as best they could to do an impossible job. But, instead of trying to make their jobs more possible, Ms. Casey decided to roll out "Introducing Teaching Standards for Nova Scotia" (2016). Investing scarce resources to measure teacher performance, at the expense of putting those same teachers in a position to actually achieve those standards, seems at best, illogical.

So, now we find ourselves at a point where a contract is being legislated. There is little in it to make teachers believe that they will be in any better position to reach those standards. Teachers had to fight tooth and nail just to get a Partnership, and a Commission, to "study" the problems once again. None of the problems teachers described way back in 2014 have been addressed by the government since the report, and none have been addressed in the contract that is now in the process of being imposed, not only on teachers, but also on the students and people of Nova Scotia. In fact, instead of trying to find solutions to help teachers better meet the needs of their students, the government has decided

to make a teacher's job even harder. And they plan to measure just how poorly teachers will try to do the impossible, while Nova Scotia's education system continues to limp along.

Sent from my iPhone