
From: pmhimmelman [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 11:22 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Law Ammendments Committee Bill 75

Importance: Low

I am writing to express my grave concerns around Bill 75 and the governments misguided stttempts to use legislation to solve their conflict with the teachers of Nova Scotia.

I have been employed as a teacher in Southwestern Nova Scotia for 20 years. I began my career as an itinerant Learning Disabilities Specialist, and now, for the past 11 years have been working as a Resource teacher. I was a Track and Field coach for 15 years, have been a Cross Country coach for 18 years, a Lego Robotics coach for 10, and a Duke of Edinburgh Leader for 7. I also serve on my school's Health Promoting Schools committee, chair the school's Program Planning Team, maintain the school's Facebook page, chaperone dances, and on and on. I am involved in my school.

Over my career I have witnessed a steady decline in standards that have been brought about by Department of Education mandates - whether of not they were in writing. Students are no longer permitted to fail, despite what the Minister of Education claims. If a decision is made to retain a child, it is the teacher's methods and abilities that are questioned and examined rather than the efforts and abilities of the student. Attendance is no longer something that can count toward a mark, so many students miss multiple days. Teachers are then directed to "catch" them up. Parents have begun to schedule prolonged holidays during regular school hours, again with the expectation that the student will be caught up. It goes on.

The statistical prediction of students who struggle is 5%. Our school of 250 students has 80 students on Adapted plans, Indicidual Program Plans, or a combination of the two. Well above the 5% mark. Added to this is the method of allocating Resource time. Schools are given 1 full time equivalent for every 175 students. Our school has 1.5 Resource teachers to deal with 80 students. My days are spent putting out fires and filling out paperwork.

When the Minister of Education states that there is no attendance policy, she is omitting to mention that there is no policy around the use of PowerSchool and Tienet as well. Most directives around these programs, at least in our board, are word of mouth or by simplest of tasks are convoluted and confusing - by failure to do them can result in reprimands. Something as straightforward as getting permission to provide support to a student often necessitates creating two different forms that must be scanned and uploaded. Entering attendees into meeting minutes can take upwards of 5 minutes per student. Multiplying that by 80 demonstrates how much time is wasted that could be used working with students.

Bill 75 does nothing to address these issues - and I have only given examples. There are many, many more. Classrooms are too crowded, behaviour policies are too lax, there are not enough specialists, and on and on. I urge the government to reconsider Bill 75, and to return to the bargaining table with the union. We do not need more committees...we need action. This was never about the money until the government made it that way.

Peter Himmelman
Shelburne Nova Scotia