
From: Jackie Swaine [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 11:30 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: To law amendments committee -Re: Bill 75 written submission

To Law Amendments Committee:

My name is Jacqueline Swaine, I am a mother of two daughters who have gone through the school system. I am a teaching assistant and I have worked in the system for 28 years. I am the President of the Service Employees International Union Local 2, NS and I am for the first time openly speaking against a bill.

When Stephen MacNeil stated back in May of 2013 that "We support the collective bargaining process and the right to strike and will continue to do so," a large number of Nova Scotians took that to mean that the Premier respected fair collective bargaining as well, given that fairness and good faith are integral parts of the collective bargaining process. Apparently they were misled.

I do not think this government truly understands what is happening in classrooms and schools across the province. The teachers have spoken out and taken a stand for the first time. Three times now, they have clearly said that there are issues in the schools that are not being addressed. This most recent time they voted 78 % no to a proposed agreement. To me that is a staggering amount of teachers saying they've had enough and there needs to be change. If the government truly understood the changes needed in the same way the teachers do, I have a hard time to believe that it would not prioritize making them over its own ability to market a balanced budget.

Teachers took on their profession in order to teach - plain and simple. But they are unable to do so because of problems in the education system - problems this government is not prepared to address. I have worked in the school system for 28 years. I have two children who have graduated from the Nova Scotia school system. It saddens me to say this, but I am very glad they are no longer in the system - and this sentiment has nothing to do with their teachers, and everything to do with systemic problems in the education system itself.

Forcing a collective agreement on teachers will not make anything better. In fact, it will make things much worse.

I ask you, when was the last time you were in a classroom? Do you really know why the teachers are fighting? I ask you, why are you not sticking to your word that you believe in the free and fair collective bargaining? Is it simply because it has not resulted in an agreement that fits squarely within your spreadsheet?

I challenge each and every one of you to leave the politics aside and do what is right. If you are considering voting for this bill, I challenge you to walk in the shoes of the students, teachers and support staff who live and work within the school system - not for a photo op or other political reasons - but to truly see for yourselves what is going on.

If you do that, I am confident that your conscience will tell you to vote against this bill. Then, the ultimate decision will be up to you - you can take a principled approach and do what is right, or you can rationalize following the orders of your boss. Rest assured that whichever way you choose, your constituents will remember come election day.