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**From:** Tara Warren <tara.lynn.warren@gmail.com>  
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**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Subject:** Bill 75 speech

I am registered to speak at the Law Amendments Committee but may not get an appointment time. Please forward my speech to the committee. Thank you.

My name is Tara Warren and I am an elementary teacher. I almost did not come today because I feel like I have too much to say about the state of our education system and in particular the influence of the Liberal government. But I'm going to try to focus my contribution to my own personal experience and perspective. I have been teaching in NS for ten years, but I came to this career late. Formally I was a biologist. I designed experiments, managed field teams, conducted research in the forests of NB, and was published in a peer-reviewed journal. I loved it, but I can truthfully say my true passion lies in educating early elementary children. I bring my joy for nature and the outdoors into my classroom to enrich and inspire my students. However difficult and challenging it is to conduct biological research, in my mind, nothing beats the complexity of a young child's brain as they develop and learn. I could go on to great lengths about my teaching philosophy and practice, but I digress. I mention it only to let you know that I approach teaching as a scientist and researcher and my anger and stress at the system is also rooted in that perspective. I fully agree that it is imperative that our system gets more teachers, EPAs, and mental health supports. However, I would like to speak about the other things that the Liberal government has and still is putting into place that puts our children's education at risk.

I am ashamed to admit that I voted for the Liberals based on a conversation on my front porch with Joachim Stroink. He assured me that the Liberals were for true educational reform. However, the "Action Plan" is based on public opinion instead of actual solid educational research. For example, the new Liberal Homework Policy (vague though it is), mandates that all children from Primary up must have homework. However, the research unequivocally says that homework does not improve the academic performance of elementary-aged children, it actually has a negative impact in fostering poor attitudes towards school. So why the new policy? It comes down to currying public favour and votes. Similarly, there is an avalanche of new testing put forth by the Liberals and more on the horizon. The Observational Survey is now required for all grade one students in the province. Just to explain, the Observational Survey is a set of 6 reading and writing tasks that are administered one-to-one, are scored, and entered into PowerSchool. The administration of one Observational Survey takes 45 min- 1hour per child. The surveys must be conducted by the end of September and then again in May. For EVERY child. And this testing begins on the third day of school. It is the expectation that the classroom teacher administers as many as possible, and also Early Literacy Support teachers and Resource teachers. While a classroom teacher is administering the test, the rest of the class is expected to be working independently. To make it even more clear, as a Primary-One teacher, the rest of the 4-6 year olds in my class were expected to work independently in a new classroom, many completely new to formal school at all, by the 3rd day of school. The Observational Survey was originally used by Reading Recovery teachers to assess struggling readers and writers. But with the obsession with data, the Liberal government mandates that every child must be assessed, regardless of whether they are reading and writing far above grade level. This is typical of Liberal policies that dismiss teacher's professional ability to recognize our struggling students, and takes teachers away from teaching in the classroom, early literacy and resource specialists away from teaching struggling students right from the start. And it doesn't end there. There are SSPs, PLCs, growth plans, all of which are based on numbers, on graphs. They are all slightly different, so one testing can't be used in place of another, but at the same time are utterly redundant. Am I against assessment? Not at all. I perform informal running records every day with my students, but then, I am also able to TEACH them while I assess. This is the developmental writing continuum put out several years ago by the HRSB. It is a thing of beauty in my mind. I can see exactly where my students are and where I may take them next. But it doesn't fit onto a neat graph, so inferior writing rubrics are developed and used for SSPs. Teachers gather in their PLCs to pour over the rubrics and writing samples to ensure that students are not marked too highly, so that the graphs can show growth by the end of the year. The scientist in me rages – what a colossal waste of time and manipulation of data in order to

appease a system driven by political motivations. The Liberals believe that the solution to problems in literacy or math, or delivering IPPs is to assess students more and enter more data. To what end? The culture of accountability and testing is an affront to evidence-based research. In the words of Roland Meighan, “nobody grew taller by being measured”. When do we get time to teach?

The Liberals should shelf Bill 75 and put a moratorium on all Department and Board mandated testing, PLCs and SPPs. These changes would save money and would show teachers that the government is ready to listen and bargain in good faith.

Sent from my iPhone