

Salutation to the Chair

I am disappointed at not being given the opportunity to speak directly to the Committee as I called and left my name yesterday at noon. My name is Andrew McCara. I am an NSTU Member and an Itinerant Teacher in HRSB with the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority. I am not a public school teacher but I work in homes, daycares, and public schools. I have a unique perspective on the educational system having been an APSEA Itinerant Teacher, an APSEA Resource Room Teacher, an APSEA Student and Family Counselor, and an APSEA Consultant for Students who are Deaf with Additional Disabilities and Deafblind in the Atlantic Provinces over the last 25 years. Most of my career has been spent Nova Scotia. I have had the opportunity to see the conditions in schools throughout the region. I would like to share my observations.

It is clear to me that there is a great need for more supports in the classroom. I have witnessed the complexities that public school teachers face on a daily basis. This ranges from unending data collection to dealing with the unique learning challenges which many students have in the modern classroom. It is much different than when I went to school over 40 years ago. It is a reality that must be faced by politicians of all political parties. We can no longer "pass the buck" by saying we need a study or a committee to examine the situation. This only serves to deny the inevitable solution which would require setting priorities and providing investment to support students.

I am all for inclusion if it is properly supported. I think that view is shared by all parents, teachers, etc. The implementation of the Special Education Act in the 1990's was flawed and never properly supported. I urge you to listen to the voices of teachers in the trenches who work with children with learning challenges on a daily basis. Their voices will only grow louder with the passage of Bill 75.

I want to speak to the government's decision to restrict the collective bargaining process and impacting the NSTU's right to take legal strike action in the future. I think it is extremely short-sighted on the government's behalf to take such action. Surely, a resolution to this impasse could be better handled through negotiation than legislation. Teachers and students in our province deserve better treatment. This sets a dangerous trend for future labour negotiations in this province. It sets up an inevitable constitutional challenge in the courts which only delays the outcome and frustrates teachers.

Finally, I was raised by a single mother who taught for 30 years in this province. She gave countless hours of support to the families of students in Pictou County. She was revered for her dedication to her students and the teaching profession. She provided a great role model as I chose to become a teacher. The actions by this government will serve to turn those who might consider being a teacher to take a different path in life and serve to demoralize those already in the profession.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew McCara

Waverley, NS