



Notes for a Submission

By

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To the Law Amendments Committee

On Bill No. 72

The Education Reform Act

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Good afternoon.

It's disappointing to appear here again in the 'people's house' to address this government's lack of transparency –

lack of consultation –

and overall lack of interest to hear from the hard working people they are forcing legislated changes on.

There is an illness growing in Nova Scotia. A sickness so invasive it threatens every working family – especially if that person is a member of a union.

Since being elected in 2013 this government has shown a complete disdain towards labour and the hard working people that labour represents.

The volume and number of anti-labour legislation proves this beyond any talking points or media messages.

This government is not interested in true democracy – in listening to the people – they are only interested in their own agenda. An agenda that more than half of Nova Scotians voted against.

They can't negotiate in good faith so they use their power to legislate what they want.

The system is sick and their addiction to use the 'people's house' to ram through bad – poorly thought out legislation – is in no one's best interest.

They claim they are interested in Transformational Reform.

Great so are most hard working people who want their kids to get a better education – who want to know their parents and grandparents will have the health care they need, if they need it.

But that is not what this government is offering.

They ignored the cries from health care workers and now the system has been pushed into crisis.

They have ignored the cries from teachers and now,

here we are again,

watching them ram through another flawed piece of legislation that only changes the name plates on the administrative doors and will do nothing to improve classrooms for our kids.

But, there is a solution.

This government can stop making every public servant out to be the enemy.

Start talking to front line people and listen to what the real issues are.

I can certainly tell you there are few, if any people, who were saying, “If only principals were removed from the NSTU my daughter or son would read more or understand math better.”

Their own argument doesn't hold water. And they know it.

For five long years working people have had to endure a government with no idea of how productive collective

bargaining works and rather than listen and learn they threw the process out the window and buried their heads in the sand.

We've seen it with Bill 1 in Health care,
and again today with Bill 72 in education.

To be fair this Liberal Government is not 100% to blame for the health care system they inherited,

but it's their poor decisions and lack of collaboration that has pushed the system into chaos.

The Liberals need to be held accountable for the current crisis and their lack of action to improve front line care.

They won't even admit there is a crisis.

The times call for significant action, laser like focus and the precision planning and implementation to identify – target – and make meaningful changes.

Instead, this government is using the same blunt instrument they always do to smash their changes onto our children and the classrooms they try to learn in.

The Minister should go back and read page 41 of the Glaze Report. It states:

- “Systems often fall short of achieving their goals because they do not spend adequate time on thinking through and planning for successful implementation in order to embed the changes into the fabric of the organization. The systems that achieve their goals are those that give

focussed attention to the task of translating visions and recommendations into actual, concrete actions. They engage in the necessary planning and deep implementation.”

We’ve all watched this government fumble and back track their way through the last few weeks.

One thing is clear – they are making this up as they go along.

We are only a little more than a year past this government locking students out of their classrooms.

Now we are expected to believe they have kid’s best interest in mind.

They have no plan.

As the president of the province’s largest union I was given no information to tell our members, who are front line in the education system, about how these changes could impact them.

Letters to the Minister went unanswered.

Only when I issued a press release and started doing interviews did I get a call from the Minister saying information would be forth coming – which by the way still hasn’t happened.

From any other government communicating to those impacted is routine practice – not from this one.

It speaks to their total lack of planning, or caring about hard working people on the front line.

Even now, we discover that fundamental parts of the bill are faulty.

As we discovered this morning, the Minister forgot to include clauses on inclusion.

In their rush to ram Bill 72 through the Legislature and this committee what other unintended consequences are left to discover?

For instance, the Trade Union act applies to “any board, commission or similar body that is an agency of Her Majesty in right of the Province: but Section 54 of this Bill provides that “the Minister is hereby constituted a corporation sole as a regional center etc.

The language is not clear that the Minister as “a corporation sole” is similar to the boards and commissions covered by the Trade Union Act.

This is further confused by Section 58 of the Bill that provides that “legal proceedings” against a regional center are to be brought as provided in the Proceedings against the Crown Act.

Arbitration of grievances under the Trade Union Act are legal proceedings. The Proceedings against the Crown Act require two months notice to the Attorney General and must be brought in the Nova Scotia Supreme Court.

While this is contrary to the Trade Union Act, the Proceedings against the Crown Act overrides other statutes.

The issue is School board employees are not employees of Her Majesty and will not be employees of her Majesty under Bill 72. Employees of a Minister are not covered by the Trade Union Act.

A simple amendment would be “For greater clarity the Trade Union Act applies to the regional centers and to their employees and the Proceedings against the Crown Act does not apply to proceedings under the Trade Union Act.”

Better yet, if the omission of inclusion and perhaps unintended consequences as I explained above are found with just a couple of days for review, the Government needs to hit the Pause button, STOP the rush and make sure they are getting this right.

To the Liberal members on this committee – WHAT’S THE RUSH?

But I have lost all hope that this government wants to listen.

Liberals are now addicted to the blunt instrument of legislation, like an illness it consumes them.

Bottom line: Liberals have shown they don’t care about the tens of thousands of hard working people who dedicate their lives to making this province the best it can be.

I have the privilege of meeting and representing over 30-thousand of them.

They are smarter than this government thinks they are.

They are more committed and dedicated to their families, their jobs and their communities –than this government gives them credit for.

They have good ideas – and they know what they are doing.

Listen to them.

Work with them.

The province – our daughters and sons – our parents and grandparents – will be better off if you do.

It's not too late to do the right thing here.

Please do it before you bring the same crisis to our classrooms that you brought to our hospitals and emergency rooms.

Thank you.