

## **CUPE School Board Coordinator Grant Dart**

My name is Grant Dart and I am a national servicing representative with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Union of Public Employees is Canada's largest union, with more than 650,000 members across the country.

I am also the coordinator for the school board sector. in Nova Scotia, where CUPE proudly represents more than 4,000 school board workers, we are the only other Union besides for Teachers that have classification in every school board across the province. Our members are educational program assistants, teacher assistants, secretary's, bus drivers, janitorial/custodians, mechanic's, skilled trades, Librarians, library techs, building operators, lunch ground monitor, community outreach workers, ECE's, cafeteria staff, and auto body technicians. It varies from board to board, on which classifications of those I listed are CUPE members, but we are the support staff that keeps our schools running.

I want to thank the members of the Law Amendments Committee for this opportunity to speak to Bill 72 the Education Reform (2018) Act.

I believe it is important to start by saying how opposed CUPE is to Bill 72 not only on the content of the Reform Bill but also due to the utter lack of respect this government showed Unions in this proses through the refusal to consultation and communication.

CUPE did seek out and independently achieve a meeting to consult with Dr Glaze in November but one would think that as the second biggest Union in the Education Sector, a consultant that wants to make meaningful reform would be actively seeking out those stakeholder for input and context into what is actually happening on the ground, in our schools, this was not the case. What was more frustrating was to have none of our conversations or recommendations reflected in her final report, instead it appears to only hold those priorities set forth by the Liberal Government. For example, we know that the Liberal party at their AGM in 2016 passed a motion to consolidate School Boards in this province and suddenly that recommendation makes it into the government funded Glaze report. This is also true on the recommendation to remove Principals and Vice Principals from the NSTU, we know that this was raised during their last round of

bargaining but was not achieved at the bargaining table, and yet again it magically makes the Glaze recommendations.

When we met with Dr. Glaze we were very clear on the importance of keeping the democratically elected school boards. For us those Boards play incredibly important roles in the School Board Sector. They bring the democratic, and independent Local voice to the education sector. Board members give our Employers, the School Boards the mandate to bargain and in some cases actually come to those Local bargaining tables to be able to share first hand and help the Union to understand the financial and operational demands the Boards are facing, this has led to more productive bargaining with Collective Agreements that work for all parties. These elected boards also give us a place to voice our concerns at a Local level, this new Reform Bill takes away that power at a Locally and put it all at the Government level. For us this is greatly concerning considering the fact that we repeatedly ask the Education Minister and his Dept to meet with us to discuss this new Bill and we could not even get a response on those requests. This certainly make us wonder how much of a chance we will have to raise and resolve issues in the future.

CUPE also pointed out in our meeting with Dr. Glaze that there was certainly a number of redundancies with in the current School Board Sector, where we see duplication in many administration positions in the Boards, for example payroll, although every Board is using the same payroll system every Board has their own payroll Dept, this is also true of IT, HR and not to mention that every Board has their own, yet different Law Firms on retainers to deal with Labour Relation issues. Unfortunately, Bill 72 does nothing to address these matter, as it keeps all the same silos, and CUPE struggles to see where this new Reform Act, will help to unify processes, streamline the system, or save administrative funds putting them back into the classrooms as this Government states it will.

Issues with Bill 72 from CUPE's perspective:

Our Certifications and our Collective Agreements are with the individual Boards. While CUPE is happy to see that in the Transition portion of this Act that the Government at this point seems willing to make sure all our

Agreements and Benefits are protected, it is still unclear who the new "employers" are. As a Union we remain uncertain on how we should best proceed to continue down the road to stable and reliable labour relations.

The making of Principals and Vice Principals management now adds another layer of supervision to our members that we do not feel is required. Not only that, putting them into an "Administrative Association" with the rest of the Senior Administration brings the potential of great costs for grievance resolves, as we will now be asking members of the same association to rule and possibly overturn decisions of their own group.

The last issue to raise with the Bill at this time is found under the Section REGIONAL CENTRES FOR EDUCATION. Under section 55 (1) the Governor in Council and the Minister have the following powers:

- (a) establish or dissolve a regional centre or amalgamate a regional centre with another regional centre;
- (b) designate a geographic area of the Province as a school region to be served by a regional centre;
- (c) alter the boundaries of a school region;
- (d) annex the whole or any part of a school region to another school region; and
- (e) determine the name of a regional centre or a school region.

This certainly opens to question is this only step one in the process to moving to one true English School Board in the Province, and under this section this move can be done at the sole discretion of the Governor in Council and the Minister, there is no oversight built in for the future or no need to bring this back for Public consultation or back to the House as a whole for debate of that matter. This truly becomes a dictatorship for the future of the Education Sector in the Province.

In conclusion, CUPE believe this entire Bill 72 should be rejected, and the Province continues with the Education System that has been in place in this Province with the Duly Democratically Elected School Boards. It is the Government that controls the funding to the Elected School Boards and for the Minister to say that this Reform Bill is the only way to fix the education sector and streamline processes is just not true, we all know that those that hold the purse strings hold the power in those situations, this is

however the way to create a Government controlled monopoly of the Education Sector and I don't believe that is what any Nova Scotian wants for our Children's education.

CUPE urges the members of the Law Amendments Committee and this Government as a whole to reject Bill 72 and ask the parties to return to meaningful, open and transparent consultation with all the stakeholders, Students, Parents, Elected Board Members, all Education Sector Workers and all the Unions that represent those workers rights. I believe that the People of Nova Scotia are the best ones to fix any possible problems with the Nova Scotia Education Sector not a Government acting on a report from a Consultant that spent 3 months looking at our system.