

Good afternoon. My name is Emily Draper and I am speaking to you today from the perspective of a teacher, parent and Nova Scotian citizen. I, along with some of the other presenters today, have also taught outside of the province of Nova Scotia. I was teacher in British Columbia as well as overseas, and I have taught in both public and private schools. However, despite my many years of my teaching experience I have yet to secure a permanent position in the Halifax Regional School Board, where I currently work. (I will get back to this point later.)

I want to talk to today about the part of this Bill that address removing Principals from the NSTU. I have several concerns about this aspect of the Bill, but first and foremost because we know from the other jurisdictions where this has been implemented, that it does not work. Not only does this erode the collegial relationship between teachers and administrators in schools, but it creates a trickle-down effect that will change the entire educational environment in this province to such an effect that a true "crisis" is almost inevitable

In Ontario, this is already happening. Since removing administrators from the union, there has not just been a massive increase in grievances, but they are now experiencing significant teacher and administrator shortages.

The schools that do have active and qualified administrators are being pulled on a regular basis to fill in for vacant teacher spots in classrooms. This means, for example, that if/when a situation in a classroom occurs where a student needs to be removed immediately there is nowhere for that student to go. Typically, when students who are continuously disrupting the classroom, such as throwing objects across the room, bullying other students, making rude, racist, sexist, or other inappropriate comments they would be removed from the classroom and sent to the Principal's office for appropriate discipline. However, when there is no principal or vice-principal present, where do these students go? They will end up staying in their classroom further escalating what could already been considered a toxic situation to the point of potentially putting other students and teachers at risk of harm. As I'm sure you can agree, this situation is in no way acceptable.

No wonder teachers are leaving. Anyone who has ever worked in a modern school setting knows that Principals and Vice-Principals are as far from managers as it gets. Schools are micro-communities that work together for a common goal. They are NOT businesses and should not be treated as such. When Principals are removed from the union, they start to feel disconnected from the people who were once their peers, they start having to answer to their employers rather than focusing first and foremost on the success and well-being of their students, teachers, and the school community.

In the jurisdictions where this change has been made they have found that conflicts in schools between teachers and administrators have increased significantly and rather than the previous system of working together, there now becomes an "us versus them" climate in the schools. In Ontario, they are finding that every year they have more and more administrators leaving their roles and either going back to the classroom or leaving the profession completely. Ontario is experiencing such a shortage of administrators that they themselves are now calling it a crisis.

Despite pay and benefit increases, they cannot find enough qualified and experienced teachers who want to fill these administrator jobs. You must remember that people go into teaching for a reason, and it is not to get rich. Teaching is often a thankless job filled with high stress, difficult working conditions, and a time commitment that goes well beyond the time spent in the classroom. However, the moment you witness one of your students finally understand a concept they have been struggling with for weeks and the joy and sense of relief you see on their faces, it all becomes worth it. People don't go into teaching to become managers.

Finally, I want to touch on how implementing this change will directly affect us here. Currently we have a sub shortage here in NS. To the point where several School Boards have had to sign agreements with the Department of Education to allow unqualified, unlicensed teachers in the classroom to cover for days when a sub cannot be secured to fill a vacancy. Yet at the same time, there are countless subs in our system who after 8, 9, 10 years of subbing they still cannot secure a permanent position in the board where they work. This is crazy and shows a fundamental flaw in what is currently happening in our system. We don't have enough teachers yet we have hundreds of teachers who still can't get a job. What is wrong here? And how can this be fixed?

Well I can tell you one thing that definitely won't fix it, and that is removing admin from the union. If that occurs, what will happen is that over time we will start to see a transition of more and more administrators leaving their roles and going back to the classroom. The government assures us that this will not cause people to be "bumped" from their current teaching positions, and in the short term that may be true. I doubt it would be allowed that mid-way through the year a principal would be able to resign from their role and take over the teaching job of the least senior teacher in their school. However, when August rolls around and all the open teaching positions are getting filled for the up-coming school year, all those principals will end up getting the jobs first because they have more seniority than the term teachers who DID have full-time positions the previous year, or subs who have been hoping to finally secure a position. This may temporarily fix the sub shortage, but that will not last as new teachers start leaving the province in droves as they can no longer afford to spend year after year subbing for minimal pay, no benefits, no job security, and no hope of a permanent position anywhere in sight.

I am one of these teachers. I am a single mother of a 10 month old infant and despite my years of experience and qualifications, when my mat leave is over in a few weeks, I will be returning to a job that after tax will leave me with less than \$25,000 a year to support my son. Now I am not looking for your sympathy, I love teaching, it is my passion, my calling, however, I am telling you this because I want you to understand that making these administrative changes is not going to fix the problems in our system. In fact, if we look at the history and evidence from the other places where these changes have been implemented, it is safe to assume that doing the same thing here will have the same result and only contribute to further problems. When people like me leave the system for full-time positions elsewhere, the permanent teachers in our system are that much more overworked, overtired, and overwhelmed. You may think this is a teacher issue, but it's not. When teachers are stressed, tired, and frustrated that directly impacts the students in the classroom. The quality of education goes

down and our students suffer. Teachers are the lifeblood of the system, their opinions, ideas and time need to be valued before ANY change in our system can be implemented in a positive way.

We all want transformation, but true transformation takes meaningful engagement of all stakeholders and thoughtful reflection and decision-making. Both of these things require time.

Finally, I want to leave you with one final thought. We already know these changes don't work so why are we copying the education systems in the world that are struggling instead of the ones that are thriving? They say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. So I ask you, is this really the legacy this government wants to leave in our province?

Thank you,

Emily Draper

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