

I am speaking with you this evening to voice my displeasure at the Government's blatant abuse of power with Bill 72. Bill 72 will alter the course and path of education in Nova Scotia and not in the positive, curative manner which Government is trying to sell their brand of snake skin oil. As an educator I am concerned by all aspects which Bill 72 proposes to change education; however, I cannot speak to all of the egregious errors so I will speak to three of the most important ones. I will speak to you this evening about the removal of administration from the NSTU, the real crisis in education which is in stark contrast to the Government created crisis which does not really exist and the loss of the democratic rights of Nova Scotians through the demolition of democratically elected bodies.

10 years ago I realized what it meant to be a principal as a mentor and teacher leader within this profession. I arrived at my school early one morning to do some work before the start of the day. I was sitting in the staffroom having my breakfast and within five minutes I was joined by my principal who also had his breakfast in tow. It was my first year at that school and the principal was very blunt and pointed asking me that morning if I was settling in okay. I indicated that I was but I remarked that I already had a fair bit of marking and prep to do as I was teaching a new course along with organizing a school trip. I half expected a rebuke about the marking languishing slightly but his response surprised me. He looked straight at me and said, "Marking always gets done. It may not be when you, the parents, or the students want it done; but it always gets done. Your health, well-being, and family come first and everything else comes second and it always gets done." In that instance he was not talking to me as my principal but rather a mentor and teacher leader, making sure that my needs as a person were met first. This principal was a true mentor rather than a micro manager and he opened a dialogue with me to help me understand that I could go to him about anything. Had he been the manager that government so desperately wants--to the point that government is infringing on Charter Rights--he would have given me a verbal reprimand about my duty to my marking and that would have been the end of the conversation, but he did not. He showed his colours of a mentor, not a manager.

Principals and VPs are not managers in the traditional sense of the word. While they are seen by the general public to manage teachers, support staff, students, buildings etc. they are not managers in the true sense. Principals and VPs are mentors to the staff and students, ensurers of safety for all those who are under their roof between the hours of eight and four everyday, leaders within the communities that they have become a part of, disciplinarians, hi-5 givers, pep talkers, motivational speakers, Band-Aid

putter on-ers, talkers off ledges and any number of things they are needed to be on any given day. Principals and VPs cannot be defined as simply as a manager when their jobs are intricate and complex with varying nuances to each of their days. Very few outside the sphere of education would be able to comprehend an administrators day because no two days are identical. Government is trying to take the square peg that is administration and is desperately trying to force them into the round hole that is the business managerial model and it does not work because principals and VPs need the square hole of the collegial model that works in this province. There has to be give and take amongst administrators and teachers to ensure that students have what they need in order to succeed, without this it pits administration versus teachers and creates a micro managerial model; which helps no one, students included and creates an us versus them atmosphere. That type of atmosphere breeds toxicity. There are only 3 Provinces in Canada in which the collegial model does not exist any longer and at least two of the three have well documented chaos, dysfunction and grievances because of the lack of collegiality. Why would Government choose to forge ahead and follow systems of failure instead of being trail blazers and keeping a functioning system fully functioning and thriving. Government believed there to be a conflict of interest during the WTR last year and it actually did not exist. The conflict was of governments own making much like the current, immediate "crisis" in education.

The current "crisis" in education is a perceived crisis that government has created. It is not the real crisis. Government is trying to apply solutions to a problem or problems that do not exist. If Government had actually listened during the Law Amendments process last year during Bill 75, they would know what the real problems and crises are such as; mental health services and supports in a timely manner, money for support in the classroom, class-size and composition, inclusion models that do not work and the list goes on and on. These are just some of the problems that are real and the government is doing very little about them save for gathering yet more committees to talk about the problems and generate yet more reports and implement solutions that only benefit government and not the students and staff struggling within the system. At no point last year were teachers concerned about PISA test scores and students ability to compete in a competitive job market. Because teachers know PISA is not a true or accurate measure of student achievement because of the random selection of the test. However if that is the measure that Government wishes to use then they neglected to mention to the general public that if Nova Scotia was a country, our students scores would be in the top 15 countries of the world. Teachers have long been propping up a broken system and have always

endeavored to ensure that students are taught the outcomes through authentic learning experiences that reach the potential of each student in the manner that they need. Teachers are still doing this but it can only be done for so long before the system crumbles under the weight. Government instead of listening to the professionals decided to fix what was never broken to begin with. They have put emphasis on what they perceive are problems, but really the problem is government and their lack of knowledge and consultation with the affected professionals and stakeholders. Instead of supporting those on the frontlines, they demeaned, demoralized and demonized which in turn helps no one. Historically governments who create crises or apply solutions to perceived problems are looking to create chaos so that their solutions can give them an air or an appearance of being the savior to the greater public. The reality is that governments who do this are totalitarian bullies, poised to suspend the democratic rights of its citizens for what they believe to be "the greater good."

As a social studies teacher I have stressed the importance of exercising democratic rights. I have used the CIVIX program since the 2015 federal election and I have taught my students to take serious the responsibility they will have at all levels of government. I teach them that government works for its constituents. How does the Liberal party plan to stand before students and explain the removal of one of their democratic rights before they have even gained it? How are Liberals currently explaining this to the people they work for; their constituents. Are they listening to their constituents? What gives this provincial government the right to disband democratically elected school boards; elected during municipally held elections. Then have the audacity to blame those same constituents and the voter apathy and lack of voter turnout as sufficient reason for the province to completely abolish the democratic right of all provincial constituents. How can they explain to those just beginning to exercise their rights that the rights at a completely different level are only based upon what suits a provincial government at the time. The answer is they cannot explain it much the same as they cannot explain the reduction of women's voices in politics when demolishing a democratically elected board. They also cannot explain the diminishing of minority voice most of whom are women as well. They cannot explain this and yet they would holler loudly if the Federal Government of the day used voter apathy and poor voter turnout as a reason to appoint provincial governments rather allow them to be democratically elected. If my previous example sounds absurd to you just imagine what your constituents are thinking based on your ill conceived logic. We live in a democratic society and all citizens should have access to their democratic rights regardless of how often they use them. Democracy is not a use it or

lose it system. As a teacher, I do not know how to unteach the lesson
government has just taught my students; the democratic rights of the
people no longer matter