



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Third Session

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2017

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2017

Sixty-second General Assembly

Third Session

12:01 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Mr. Gordon Wilson, Mr. Keith Irving

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Before we commence with our daily routine today, I do want to take this opportunity to remind our visitors in the gallery that you are not permitted to record or photograph anything in this Chamber. Use of cellphones and other smart personal devices is permitted for purposes of texting only. There is to be no placing or receiving of calls from the gallery.

It has been brought to my attention several times in the past few days of photographs and recordings from the gallery being placed on social media which, as is stated in the rules provided you as you entered in the building, it is contrary to the rules of this Chamber. If this rule is not followed today, as Speaker I will pause the proceedings in order that all electronic devices in the gallery be put away for the remainder of this sitting day.

I also want to remind members of the gallery that any displays of favour or displeasure are not permitted in this Chamber.

We'll now begin with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause reads: “We, the Constituents of the Liberal riding of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank are requesting our MLA to VOTE NO on Bill 75. We encourage our MLA to do the right thing for the constituents in (sic) which he was elected to represent.”

There are over 600 signatures on this petition and I have also affixed my own signature, and I table the petition.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery - I always get the galleries mixed up - in the west gallery, we have Trish Keeping who is on the steering committee for Nova Scotia Parents for Teachers and if she'd rise and get the welcome of the House. (Applause)

Ms. Keeping has been - well, she's dropped these off to be tabled. I am tabling a petition with 4,117 names, the operative clause is to - it is quite a long operative clause so I'll try to edit it for you, Mr. Speaker. It is basically to:

Respect the rights of Nova Scotia Teachers in our public schools, and recognize and support freedom of association . . . Do not proclaim Bill 148 . . . Do not impose a contract on the Teachers . . . Address the following needs of children in our public schools immediately . . . Ensure more student support-EPA's, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, guidance counselors, behavioural specialists . . . Ensure additional preparation time for children on IPP's . . . Ensure easier access and less wait time for specialist services . . . Ensure shorter wait times for Psychological Educational Assessments . . . Ensure real caps for P-12 . . . Ensure new cap for combined classes that have 2 curriculums . . . Reduce the amount of School Board and Department of Education initiatives . . . Change the entry level age of students starting school to 5 years.

I'll table that petition.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I beg to leave to introduce a petition. The operative clause is:

We the undersigned, in support of Lockeport Regional High School, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to stop its misguided effort to impose a contract on teachers and demand it return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair labour agreement that responds to teachers' concerns and makes improvements to classroom conditions in our public school system.

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my name.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition entitled Health Care Crisis in Cumberland. The operative clause reads:

Physician Shortages, Hospital Emergency Room Closures and Reduced Care Levels are just a few reasons for citizens to speak out and demand action to ensure better health care delivery practices now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this petition contains 454 signatures, and I have added my own signature to the petition.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to leave to table a petition as well, and the operative clause says:

We the undersigned, in support of St. Mary's Elementary School, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to stop its misguided effort to impose a contract on teachers and demand that it return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair labour agreement that responds to teachers' concerns and makes improvements to classroom conditions in our public school system.

I have affixed my signature, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to leave to table a petition signed by 42 residents from the Glace Bay and Albert Bridge area. The operative clause states:

We the undersigned firmly believe that the Nova Scotia government should refrain from imposing collective agreements on the teachers of Nova Scotia. We further firmly assert that the government should invest in education to improve the learning environment for students and the working conditions for teachers. We finally assert that the government should immediately begin fair and meaningful collective bargaining with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

I have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

We the undersigned, in support of Barton Consolidated School, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to stop its misguided effort to impose a contract on teachers and demand that it return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair labour agreement that responds to teachers' concerns and makes improvements to classroom conditions in our public school system.

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being: "We, the constituents of the Liberal riding of Clayton Park Fairview, request that you **VOTE NO** to bill 75 in the 3rd reading of the bill."

This is signed by 28 residents and I have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause is:

We the undersigned, in support of Clark's Harbour Elementary School, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to stop its misguided effort to impose a contract on teachers and demand that it return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair labour agreement that responds to teachers' concerns and makes improvements to classroom conditions in our public school system.

I have affixed my signature to that.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause reads:

We the undersigned, in support of Plymouth School, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to stop its misguided effort to impose a contract on teachers and demand that it return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair labour agreement that responds to teachers' concerns and makes improvements to classroom conditions in our public school system.

I have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause being:

We the undersigned, in support of J.L. Ilsley High School, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to stop its misguided effort to impose a contract on teachers and demand that it return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair labour agreement that responds to teachers' concerns and makes improvements to classroom conditions in our public school system.

I, too, have affixed my signature.

MR. SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS****STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION****INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****NOTICES OF MOTION**

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal caucus will be surprised to find that something positive has come from their efforts to ram through Bill No. 75 . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Is that a notice of motion or a member's statement?

We'll now move on to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

BROKEN GLASS VOTER GROUPS - BILL NO. 75 RESPONSE

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: You'd think we haven't been doing this all week, Mr. Speaker.

Members of the Liberal caucus will be surprised to find that something positive has come from their ramming through of Bill No. 75. By ignoring real classroom reform and treating teachers with disrespect, this government has ignited a fire of political engagement across Nova Scotia. Over the past week, thousands of people have gathered outside this Legislature. Thousands more spent sleepless nights watching our proceedings here.

Now broken glass voter groups are sprouting up in Liberal constituencies across the province. Because of the actions of this government, thousands of Nova Scotians have reclaimed the power of their democratic voice. Mr. Speaker, that's about all that is good about Bill No. 75.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

LIBERAL MLAs: BILL NO. 75 - VOTE NO

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I hope everyone in this Chamber had a great long weekend, and hopefully a little extra time off let our Liberal MLAs do a little soul-searching. Some people believe that while your body may perish, your soul lives on. “For how long?” some may say. Forever. This is a long time to carry around the weight of one’s wrongdoings.

Voting in favour of this bill will have consequences for a long time to come, and I ask the Liberal MLAs to listen to the many, many teachers who have descended on this House during the last week and vote “no” on Bill No. 75. While they may have voted in favour of the bill during second reading, it is not too late to do the right thing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PROJ. COMFORT: VOLS. - THANK

HON. JOANNE BERNARD: Mr. Speaker, losing a loved one is never easy, especially when it comes as a result of violence in our communities. CeaseFire Halifax community mobilizer Amanda Bradshaw realized this, and with the help of many community supporters, created Project Comfort.

CeaseFire, as many of us in the House know, has a mission to inspire change and encourage the use of non-violent solutions. With the help of folks like Rowena and Cheyenne Hardy, Shirley and Miguel McFeters, and other dedicated volunteers, CeaseFire Halifax holds a meeting once a month at the Dartmouth North Community Centre. Here, members gather together and assemble blankets to give to those affected by the loss of a loved one due to violence.

I ask all my colleagues in the House to join me in sending a heartfelt thanks to the volunteers of Project Comfort on coming together and brightening up the lives of those affected by violence in our communities by making these blankets.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BILL NO. 75: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - EXCLUDED LIST

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, on February 16th, over 300 Nova Scotians who wanted to present at the Law Amendments Committee on Bill No. 75 were prevented from doing so by this Liberal Government.

They include Christine Campbell, Paul Lenarczyk, Nathan Beeler, Molly Hurd, Laurie Collins, Desiree Daniele-Taylor, Holly Laventure, Stacey Rudderham, Lara Fawthrop, Tami Cox-Jardine, Megan Moriarty, Melanie Kennedy, Gina Grattan, Todd

Pellerine, Wanda Leese, Denise Dodge-Baker, Lamar Eason, Ian Kent, Jaylene Chase, Roy Francis, Mark Savoury, Joanna Keith, Denise Cameron, Sarah Linda, Brennan McCracken, Allison Stewart, Nicole Whiteway, Shannon Fraser, Katie O’Hearn, and Ben Sichel.

To be continued, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER: Good job.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

WHITE, BOB: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, it is only fitting, on this night when we Nova Scotian legislators are forced back into the House of Assembly at 12:01 a.m. to debate, under cover of darkness, third reading of Bill No. 75 - a detestable bill, an attack on the rights of the teachers of this province, and indeed an attack on democracy itself - that we should pause to honour the passing of a great Canadian labour leader and champion of the middle class, Mr. Bob White.

The government that is responsible for this violation of workers’ rights needs to be reminded who made them a majority government in the first place: the people. And just as the people giveth, the people can also take away.

As Bob White once said so eloquently, “While governments may introduce policies that make it more difficult for us to progress, no legislation will silence our voices or stop our determination to contribute to building a better society, a better country, and a better world.”

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton-Richmond.

BOUDREAU, LORENZO LOUIS: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, family and friends gathered yesterday to celebrate the life of Lorenzo Louis Boudreau, who passed away on February 16th at the age of 94.

Lorenzo served Canada in Iceland during World War II, aiding with anti-submarine missions in the North Atlantic. He later owned and operated an Irving Oil garage in Arichat for 30 years.

Lorenzo was made an honorary Richmond municipal councillor after attending every council meeting for over 20 years. He was a charter member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 150 and maintained his membership for 60 years. A local historian, Lorenzo traced the genealogy of every family on Isle Madame.

A true gentleman and a lifelong Liberal, Lorenzo and his wife of 68 years, Corinne, were fixtures in church and at community events and their regular drives around Richmond County.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in extending our deepest sympathy to Lorenzo's wife, Corinne, and his entire family.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS - LIVE STREAMING

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, last week politics in Nova Scotia changed forever with the live streaming of proceedings from this House - many, many Nova Scotians got a glimpse into what happens in here. The lights were turned on, so to speak. We know that this government had us sitting all night and we're back here again tonight to sit all night, hoping to do things under the cover of darkness, get in and get out and maybe get things done. But with the live streaming it's a shocking number of people who saw how things operate in this House and it has really emboldened a new group of Nova Scotians to get interested in politics and to try and make sure their voice is heard.

I want to give a tip of the hat today to the CBC, obviously for the fine work they did, but another tip of the hat to Sean Joudry, back at our office. He's a very technically savvy person and I want to give a tip of the hat to him for turning the lights on.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

BILL NO. 75: LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE - ATTENDANCE RESTRICTIONS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, at the same time this government is attacking teachers with this imposed contract, it is also attacking the democratic process. There is no denying that this government wants to pass this bill as quickly as possible. However, ignoring the democratic right of teachers and other Nova Scotians to come to the Law Amendments Committee and express their views is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the government should not expect Nova Scotians to give up their democratic right without a fight. While they may have been prevented from speaking at Law Amendments Committee, teachers, parents, and students have made their way to this House at all hours of the day and night to make their voices heard.

If their voices are not heard and Bill No. 75 is not stopped, their voices will certainly be heard in the next provincial election.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

SURETTE, GARY: TEAM DIABETES - ACHIEVEMENTS

HON. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize Gary Surette, a resident of Clayton Park West, for his amazing achievements with Team Diabetes. Team Diabetes is a wonderful program administered by Diabetes Canada in which Canadians raise funds for diabetes research as they train and run, hike, or cycle at events around the world.

In 15 years Team Diabetes has raised more than \$34 million for diabetes research. As a member of Team Diabetes, Mr. Surette raised an astounding \$19,000 before competing in the 2016 SSE Airtricity Dublin Marathon this past October. Competing in the Over 60 category Mr. Surette finished a full marathon in 5 hours and 23 minutes.

Mr. Surette plans to join Team Diabetes again this year for a marathon in Portugal. Please join me in congratulating Gary Surette on his amazing accomplishment, and wish him the best of luck in the next diabetes marathon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

BILL NO. 75 - PAUSE

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to rise today to speak about a friend and teacher, Gena Henderson, who sadly feels disrespected by being muzzled by the Liberal Government. Gena was prevented last week from participating in the Law Amendments Committee. Gena has a class of 28 students and has access to one desktop computer. She brings her own tablet from home for the students to use in order to teach coding. Coding is deemed essential for being competitive in today's market.

Without the tools Gena needs in the classroom and without the ability to hold certain students back who haven't grasped the skills they need, she has seen more and more young Nova Scotians graduating from school utterly unprepared and who can't compete with students from other provinces for university spots and job placements.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Gena Henderson and her students, I would like to ask this government to do the right thing and press pause on Bill No. 75.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

ZINCK, DAVE - COMMUN. CONTRIBUTIONS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, David Zinck teaches at Dartmouth High School. Among his many extracurricular contributions besides dance and school plays,

Dave coaches the high school improv team. In the past he has coached teams all the way to the national competitions.

Dave has had to sacrifice his coaching duties as the Liberal Government pushed teachers into work-to-rule action. Over the past two months during lunch hours which should have been filled with creative output for his students, Dave has walked down to the Dartmouth North MLA's constituency office, no matter the weather, to try and convey the hardships within the education system. He documented every day on Facebook.

David Zinck is exemplary of how and why our teachers hold such a vital role in our communities. He is engaged, inspiring, and committed to his classroom.

I would like the House to acknowledge all he has done for his students, his colleagues, and his community.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

FEST. ANTIGONISH - ANNIV. (30th)

HON. RANDY DELOREY: This summer, Festival Antigonish is celebrating 30 years. Recognized nationally as a top-notch professional summer theatre, Festival Antigonish has established itself as an economic, cultural, and tourism anchor of this region. It is a significant contributor to the arts by engaging established Nova Scotia artists and also giving emerging artists a platform to grow.

Festival Antigonish has helped make Antigonish a tourism destination. The impact is felt by the entire local economy as people come into our downtown for dinner and a play or come from out of town for a weekend getaway of theatre and any of the other exceptional activities offered regularly in our town and county.

Recently, I had the pleasure of participating in the launch of Festival Antigonish's 2017 season preview. There will be something for everyone as the season promises to provide an exceptional summer of professional theatre in Antigonish and will include three plays for the main stage series and one on the family stage.

I invite my colleagues in the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Festival Antigonish on 30 years.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

BILL NO. 78 - NEGOTIATIONS

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: In the growing unrest surrounding Bill No. 75, two themes have emerged: disrespect from the Liberals and determination from the teachers.

Teachers rejected three tentative agreements with increasing numbers each time. For the first one, the government tried to ram a deal down their throats with the threat of imposing a contract that was even worse. Teachers said no. For the second deal, the Liberals hung Bill No. 148 plus an imposed contract over teachers' heads. Even more teachers said no. For the third agreement, Liberals dangled Bill No. 148 and an imposed contract, and broke negotiating confidence. Teachers said no.

So here we are, where the Liberals always intended, an imposed contract. Teachers say no. PCs say no. Liberals say yes, but they blame the teachers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

FISH. & AQUACULTURE - PFD USAGE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: I think the time has come to take the guesswork out of regulations outlining when a fisher should be wearing a personal floatation device, or PFD for short.

Currently, the regulations in Nova Scotia require a fisher to wear a PFD when a risk of drowning is identified. But the law does not provide any details about what this means. The chairperson of the Transportation and Safety Board of Canada has recently said that this type of regulation is simply not good enough. I believe it is time to change the regulations in this province so that fishers are required to wear PFDs when they are on deck on the water.

Nova Scotia is a national leader when it comes to economic performance of our fisheries. I believe it's time also to be a national leader in the workplace safety of fishers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

NORWOOD FAM.: CONST. IND. - ACHIEVEMENTS

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize Paul Norwood and his wife, Anna, and their two sons, Josh and Chad, of Porters Lake, who own and operate Nature Ridge Homes Ltd.

Nature Ridge Homes Ltd. is known as a premium land development and home construction company striving to set new standards of excellence in the residential construction industry. Nature Ridge Homes Ltd. is the recipient of the Nova Scotia Home Builders Association award for the Most Outstanding Home of the Year in the 2,001 to 3,000 square foot category and the Highest EnerGuide Rating in the Parade of New Homes in 2015 and 2016.

I applaud and congratulate Paul Norwood and his family on their tremendous achievements and for contributing to Nova Scotia's economy through their leadership in the residential construction industry.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

BILL NO. 75 - CLASSROOM CONDITIONS

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: Our education system is at a standstill. The McNeil Liberals think that imposing a contract on our 9,300 teachers will make everything go back to normal.

Teachers, students, and parents have painted a picture of what normal looks like in a classroom today. For the Liberal Government to want to go back to that is shameful.

The reality is Bill No. 75 does nothing to address classroom conditions. We've heard loud and clear from teachers, parents, and students at the Law Amendments Committee that this contract does nothing to better the education system in our province.

Yet the Liberal Government continues to ram through this legislation. It's shameful and will do nothing to improve classrooms for our students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

BILL NO. 75: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - PROCEDURES

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, the conduct of Liberal Cabinet members during last week's marathon Law Amendments Committee session did not go unnoticed by the public.

Several speakers called out members opposite for texting during their presentations and for talking, and when the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board chose to put on his interrogative hat with one citizen, he received a lecture from another educator including telling him the fact that Nova Scotia has lost teachers under this government. Then, to top it off, the Liberal members stormed out at 8:00 p.m. while 300 to 400 members of the public were still on the list wanting to speak. Facebook live streams went viral and rallied citizens against the Premier and his caucus.

Little did they know that the voices of some citizens who had not made their arbitrary cut-off would still be heard when those of us in the Opposition took over the Red Chamber to chants of "Whose House? Our House, the people's House", and we stuck it out and heard a handful more witnesses.

The members opposite should therefore think twice before walking out on Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

**DEAGLE-GAMMON, CATHY
- PROGRESS WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE AWARD**

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to honour a friend and a resident in the constituency of Waverly-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

The Progress Women of Excellence Awards hosted by the Canadian Progress Club Halifax Cornwallis marked their 27th year for this prestigious event. This annual fundraiser hosted in support of Phoenix Youth Programs is the only one of its kind in the province and has raised well over \$1 million dollars to date. The award honours seven inspirational women who play an important role in our community and are in the pinnacle of their professions.

Fall River resident Cathy Deagle-Gammon, Executive Director at DASC Industries, was the recipient of the award in the Health Sport and Wellness category. I would like to congratulate Cathy on this well-deserved award and thank the Progress Club for their continued support of Phoenix Youth Programs.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

GOV'T. (N.S.): BILL NO. 75 - RECONSIDER

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are proud people. We are surrounded by strong traditions, and it is up to us to make sure that these values and virtues are passed along to the next generation. During Law Amendments Committee, it was heart-wrenching to listen to our teachers and administrators telling their stories. We only had the opportunity to hear less than one-quarter of those who asked to speak because our Liberal Government would not do what was necessary to allow each of those requested to present to do so.

We should never forget who we represent. We join our teachers today to demand this government to reconsider Bill No. 75 before it's too late.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LIBERAL GOV'T. - NIGHT HOUSE SITTINGS

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I have been asked a number of times by teachers and constituents why we are meeting here in the middle of the night. It is ludicrous. We are not at our best, and Nova Scotians deserve our best.

However, they also deserve better than Bill No. 75. They deserve better than a government fixed on getting its predetermined way at the bargaining table. They deserve better than an under-resourced public education system where the best thing going for us - a cohort of well-prepared, passionate, and professional teachers - feel underappreciated.

So, to answer Nova Scotians who are wondering, we are meeting here in the middle of the night because we would not guarantee the Liberal Government that we would grant safe and speedy passage to Bill No. 75. We are here in the middle of the night to demonstrate our opposition. Teachers, students, and parents, we are here in the middle of the night for you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MS. MILLER: I'd like to draw the House's attention to the east gallery where we are joined tonight by John MacDonald. He is a valued constituent of East Hants, and I'd like him to rise to receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie.

**EAST COAST HYDRAULIC & MACHINERY LTD.
- COMMU. INVESTMENT**

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, we often underestimate the big impact of small business in our communities often overlooking their value and contributions. Businesses like East Coast Hydraulics & Machinery Ltd. are a shining example of the importance of entrepreneurs and the small businesses they create.

For over 30 years, this Mulgrave-based company has served the industrial and marine industries as well as onshore and offshore oilfield services. Brothers Dana and Mike Feltmate built this company from the ground up now employing close to 40 employees during peak times and working on projects throughout eastern Canada. They are the quintessential family business with some of Dana's and Mike's children involved in the

day-to-day operations and, like most small businesses, this next generation will be prepared to carry on their legacy.

Mr. Speaker, to East Coast Hydraulics Machinery Limited and all our small businesses across this great province, I say thank you for investing in our communities and our future.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

N.S. TEACHERS - THANK/RESPECT

MR. LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, seldom have members of the Law Amendments Committee listened to so many moving presentations as they did for Bill No. 75. Although only a fraction of those who wanted to present were given the opportunity, a large fraction of presenters choked back tears as they told committee members about what it's like to be in a classroom every day. Some teachers told of physical assaults, verbal assaults, outdated books, and children who need more support than they are getting.

Teachers care deeply about their students and they worry about the effects this broken education system is having on them. For some young people a good teacher will transform their lives. That's something not many of us can say.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia teachers deserve our thanks. More importantly, they have earned our respect.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

TEACHERS STRIKE - EFFECTS

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has tried to reason that the purpose of imposing a contract on teachers is to allow for things to return to normal. However, this course of action by the Premier and his government has simply taken things from bad to worse.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday over 9,000 teachers from across Nova Scotia walked off the job for the first time in the history of this province. Is this normal?

Mr. Speaker, the wounds that have been opened up during this process are going to take a long time to heal. For the Premier to suggest that things will return to normal after a contract has been imposed, shows he is clearly out of touch with the effect this dispute has had on teachers, parents, and students.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

HUTT, CDR JEFF: HMCS CHARLOTTETOWN - COMMAND CONGRATS.

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a constituent of Halifax Armdale who has, throughout his professional life, demonstrated a strong and enduring commitment to our nation's security, humanitarian efforts and interests abroad. Commander Jeff Hutt, a Saint Mary's University graduate, has served in the Canadian Armed Forces since 1998. He has trained with and served in our Navy from one edge of our country to the next. Through study and service, he has steadily ascended the ranks of our Navy, serving as Combat Officer, Weapons Officer, Lieutenant Commander, and both Executive Officer and Commanding Officer on HMCS *Preserver*.

In January, Commander Hutt returned to his very first ship, the HMCS *Charlottetown* in a new and prestigious role where he became Commanding Officer of the ship at a ceremony I had the privilege of attending. I know this was a very proud moment in our history.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in wishing Commander Hutt, his wife Karen, and their children the very best.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

BILL NO. 75: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - APPROACH

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 122 years, Nova Scotia teaches went on strike. That will be the legacy of this Liberal Government. It is the only government in our province's long history to have been unable to work out a deal with our teachers.

The reason is easy to see: at every turn this government has shown that it doesn't value or respect teachers. They don't respect teachers enough to bargain in good faith. They don't respect teachers enough to make real changes in classrooms and they don't respect teachers enough to listen to them at Law Amendments Committee.

With such a disgraceful record of disrespect, it's hard to imagine that this relationship can ever be repaired. Through their confrontational approach, the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development have done lasting damage to the education system of our great province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PARENTS/TEACHERS: CLASSROOM CONDITIONS - CONCERNS

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I recently attended an information session on the progress of Dartmouth South Academy. The room was full of engaged parents,

teachers, and organizers as they discussed the green areas that would be surrounding the schools and how these spaces will improve students' outdoor experiences.

What struck me beyond the initial engagement and the high attendance was parents and teachers - a shared concern about classroom conditions.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier thinks parents are on his side with a contract that puts nothing into classrooms, I think he has got it all wrong. I hear from parents and teachers expressing their frustrations with this government's inability to address overcrowded, under-resourced, and at times, unmanageable classroom conditions. The people of Dartmouth South are paying attention and I'm hopeful that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Premier remain aware of this.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley.

COLE HBR. & AREA BUS. ASSOC./VOLS. - EFFORTS - THANK

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the work in community engagement that is being accomplished by the Cole Harbour and Area Business Association. Cole Harbour-Portland Valley is very lucky to have this group working and bringing the community together. Once again, they've done it by putting two family fun events.

On November 27, 2016, the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting was held at Westphal-Cole Harbour Fire Station. Despite challenging weather conditions, blustery winds, and Boys and Girls Club kids holding down tents, the event was a success for local families who came out to visit Santa and enjoy free coffee, hot chocolate, and tea.

Yesterday they had a Family Fun Skate at Cole Harbour Place, and again the group is showing its commitment to community and supporting the family in a time of hosting events. I'd like to thank the association for their great work, and the volunteers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

DONNELLY, KENZI: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT - COMMEND

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Tonight, I would like to acknowledge a person who has sat in the gallery through many overnight hours. This young leader was determined to make it to the exclusive list of presenters at Law Amendments Committee. She is an emerging young leader in our province and her name is Kenzi Donnelly. Kenzi is a Grade 12 student at Prince Andrew High, an advocate for civic engagement and a fierce promoter of better mental health supports in our schools. She models the ideal that politics is about finding common ground across Party lines and doing the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, Kenzi is in Ottawa this week representing Nova Scotia at the Forum for Young Canadians in Parliament. Kenzi Donnelly is Nova Scotia's future. I ask all members to join me in commending her on her actions.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BILL NO. 75: GOV'T. MEMBERS - PASSAGE PREVENT

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I am approaching six months as an MLA. Soon I'll stop saying I'm new at this but I hope I never get used to the exceptional privilege of receiving heartfelt emails like we all have this week. One high school teacher, Erin Hart Breen from Havre Boucher, wrote us all and ended, "Please do not enable legislation that betrays the values and standards of this province and its citizens."

My one frustration is that I am not in a position to prevent Bill No. 75 from being passed. I remind my colleagues on the government side of the House that they are.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

NICHALOS, MIKE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that we lost Mike Nichalos on November 13, 2016. Mike was well-known in many social circles in Halifax, an avid football fan and a player at QEH. He is best known as the owner of the famous Greco Canadian Social Club. Mike will be missed by many friends, past members of this Assembly, including the member for Cape Breton-Richmond. Rest in peace my friend, you will be missed.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BILL NO. 75: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - EXCLUDED LIST

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, over 300 Nova Scotians were prevented from speaking at Law Amendments Committee on Bill No. 75 last Thursday. Those excluded include: Perman Edwards, Jacques Boudreau, Michelle Myers, Brian Shay, Jenny Carroll, Vanessa Turner, Kemble Flynn, Jennifer Field, Mike Diabo, Amanda Strang, Desiree Danielle-Taylor, Calum Leadbeater, Trudy Bunker, William Lunn, Roberta St-Pierre, Achilles Hucze, Charity Buchanan, Carole Foran-Swinkels, Carolyn Cleary Meagher, Beth Baker, Sarah Lindel, Robin Jensen, Jamie Apa, Joey MacIsaac, Mona MacNeil, Colleen Harris, Steve Harris, Sharon O'Connor, Pat Savage, Krista LeBlanc, Joanne Treen, Jennifer Funke, Kris Kholer, Lisa Craig, Andrea Heans, and Janice McGrath. To be continued.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

GOV'T. (N.S.): COMMITMENTS - KEEP

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: This Liberal Government says one thing and does another.

They said they wanted to hear from Nova Scotians, yet they shut down Law Amendments Committee. They said they were listening to teachers, yet they set up a committee instead of enacting real change. They said they would let members vote freely yet forced them to toe the Party line.

Because of this, it's our kids who suffer the most. They're forced to be taught in overcrowded classrooms with outdated materials and not enough resources. Teachers are forced to spend their time entering endless data instead of teaching our kids.

Teachers have told us what they need, yet it falls on deaf government ears. This government must start doing what they say.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

RETIEFF, KRYSTAL: SPIRIT OF THE EAST - CONGRATS.

HON. MARK FUREY: The DesBrisay Museum and the Bridgewater Museum Commission are always on the lookout for new exhibits.

Recently, the museum was fortunate to secure an exhibition of nearly 30 pieces of work of Mi'kmaq artist Krystal Retieff. Krystal's vibrant work is amazing. Each piece tells a story. Titled Spirit of the East, this exhibit runs until March 7th. I would encourage residents of Lunenburg County to take the opportunity to view the many pieces of artwork.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Krystal Retieff on the Spirit of the East and commend the DesBrisay Museum for consistently finding amazing work to showcase.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PREM./LIBERAL MLAs; SOUL-SEARCHING - OUTCOME

MR. TIM HOUSTON: We came here last week as a result of the Premier's soul-searching. He said he did some soul-searching. The result of that soul-searching was Bill No. 75, and we found ourselves here. As the Liberal Government drew up their plan for the week, it was not in the plan - we know, Mr. Speaker - to be here still today. They had anticipated that it would wind up on Friday. But the snow and the weather put a little wrinkle in that plan and instead sent all the Premier's MLAs back to their constituencies

for a three-day weekend of hearing from constituents and probably doing their own soul-searching.

Later today, we'll find out how that soul-searching worked out for those members and for all Nova Scotians, as the members will take their place at some point today and stand and vote on this bill. We can only hope that their soul-searching produced a different result than the Premier's soul-searching.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Permission to do an introduction?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. PORTER: I'm pleased to have with us some constituents from my area this evening, now into the morning hours. I know some have been here before, but I want to mention two specifically: Mr. Drew Jardine and his sister Ms. Lauren Jardine, along with their mom, Tammy, who's with them as well. It's nice to have you here this evening to join us for the proceedings. Let's give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

POWER, JANIS: CALGARY MARATHON - FLAG-BEARER

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: In November, Janis Power, a marathon runner from New Germany, applied to be a flag-bearer for Nova Scotia at the Calgary Marathon this Spring in honour of Canada's 150th birthday. In mid-January, she received word that she was on the short list. She was, needless to say, excited. In late January, she received word that she will indeed be the proud carrier of the provincial flag. She will be given the VIP treatment: flight, hotel, tours, meals, and many other extras.

Janis has been a long-time proud runner and has been a proud Nova Scotian even longer. I am sure she will represent Nova Scotia with the greatest of passion and dignity.

I would like to congratulate Janis Power on being named flag-bearer for Nova Scotia at the Calgary Marathon in late Spring.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MACLEAN, DAVID: BEALACH BREAGHA TRAIL - CONTRIBUTION

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Let us recognize David MacLean of East Lake Ainslie. David has been a driving force for trail development. Just recently, the fruits of his

labour and the Lake Ainslie Trail Committee's were realized with the opening of the Bealach Breagha Trail.

Part of the Trans-Canada Trail and ready for Canada's 150th Anniversary, this section will complete a trail connection between Inverness and Whycocomagh. It is a multi-use trail, and it will become a destination for snowmobile enthusiasts and others.

Mr. Speaker, the future of winter tourism in Cape Breton Island holds great promise. Investments by government are needed to grow this industry, but those investments cannot happen without people like David. His passion and determination to see this project through to completion will have a lasting impact on his community and on our province. May we extend a round of applause to recognize David MacLean for his valuable contribution. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

TAHINA, MAYAR - ACAD. SUCCESS

MR. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, Mayar Tahina is a young refugee from Syria who, along with his parents and three siblings, was the first sponsored family to be welcomed to the Annapolis Valley in the winter of 2016. Since arriving a year ago, Mayar has worked exceptionally hard at studying English and Canadian culture. He set his sights towards a university education and was accepted into the Computer Science Department at Acadia University.

After a recent mid-term, Mayar's professor sent word around to the Director of Computer Science, the Dean of Science, and the president of the university, to let them know that on an exam where the class averaged 60 per cent, Mayar's score was 100 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to congratulate Mr. Tahina on his academic success. We are all proud of his achievements and very pleased to count him as a Nova Scotian.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

LOCHEAD, KIM: TEACHING - BACK TO BASICS

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my friend, Kim Lochead, a Grade 1 teacher from Pictou West. Although there is a cap of 20 on her class, she in fact has 24 students. Kim says the past two years have been the most difficult in her career, due to the increased number of students with behaviour problems and the enormous amount of data collection and entry required by her. After spending approximately 15 days with her class, she is expected to assess all 24 students, an hour per

child and countless hours of data entry. Kim wants to go back to teaching these children to read and write, back to the basics. She wants to stop teaching to the test.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to allow teachers to teach.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Beaver Bank.

METZLER, JASMINE - MINING ASSOC. VIDEO CONTEST

MR. STEPHEN GOUGH: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Jasmine Metzler of Middle Sackville on her recent early bird win in the Nova Scotia Mining Association video contest. Along with personnel from the Mining Association, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting and presenting Jasmine with her cash award in my office on February 6th.

Ms. Metzler has indicated that she will use the funds to purchase equipment that will allow her to make more educational videos. The final deadline for contest submissions is February 28th. Also, kudos to the Nova Scotia Mining Association in engaging youth by making learning fun.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LEGISLATURE: PEOPLE - WELCOME

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: This Liberal Government should be ashamed of themselves. Many of the teachers who came to the House last week noted that they saw more maturity and compassion in their students than they did from the Liberal members. At every turn, we saw Liberals shut down debate and suffocate the public voice. Hundreds of people were denied their chance to share their experiences and thoughts on Bill No. 75, but the Liberals couldn't be bothered to make time to hear them.

We should be welcoming those who want to come to the House, the people's House, not turning them away and silencing their voices. The Liberals should take lessons in listening from those students. I'm sure they could learn a lot.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

THERIAULT, GILLES:

ATL. CDN. MARINE INDUSTRIES HALL OF FAME - INDUCTION

MR. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Gilles Theriault, General Manager of A.F. Theriault and Son, on his recent induction into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame. Gilles, with his cousin, David Theriault, manages

this family-owned company. It has been an important local employer since 1938, when Gilles' grandfather started making wooden boats, mainly for the local market.

Over the years the company expanded and was passed to the sons of Augustin Theriault. Now one of the largest privately owned boatyards in Atlantic Canada, the company's 150-member workforce build aluminium, steel, and fibreglass boats which are delivered near and far - and include our new ferry to Brier Island.

Gilles learned about the company, he learned about the aspects of the company, became a machinist, a certified boat builder. Now the general manager, he is the face of the company, promoting his company, his industry, and his province, wherever he travels. Today I'd like to congratulate Gilles on his great achievement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**BILL NO. 75 - LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.:
EXCLUDED PRESENTERS - APOLOGIES**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my responsibility as MLA is to represent people who have given us the honour to sit in this Chamber. The Standing Committee on Law Amendments is an important place to hear the views of Nova Scotians. Katie O'Hearn wanted to share her views about Bill No. 75 in Law Amendments Committee. She followed all the rules, but she was denied the right to speak her mind. Sadly, Katie was just one of 300 Nova Scotians that this Liberal Government didn't care enough about to make time to listen to. This government owes those 300 people an apology; this government has failed them.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those thoughtful member statements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: TEACHERS - WORKING RELATIONSHIP

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, before the last election, when he was running for Premier, the now Premier said in this House, "In order for that agreement to have any kind of substance, both the employer and the employee have to feel valued at the end of the day when that agreement is finished." Later today, the Premier will impose a contract on 9,300 hard-working teachers. My question to the Premier is, how can the Premier repair his broken relationship with the province's teachers when there is obviously so little hope of working together now?

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind him that we had three tentative agreements negotiated with two different executives of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. We were at the bargaining table when work-to-rule began. We had an agreement that was agreed upon and actually recommended by the executive to its membership. We were hoping that the agreement would be ratified; it was not. It's clear that work-to-rule has had an impact on our students. This piece of legislation will allow for teachers to continue to get back in their classroom to teach and also allow teachers to respond and hear their voices so that we can hear from them to continue making classroom improvements.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the Premier that there were three different, successful lawsuits against two different governments to try to do exactly what he's doing, costing them hundreds of millions of dollars. No wonder broken-glass voters' groups are popping up in all the Liberal constituencies in the province. They know that the government saved a lot of money on Friday when the teachers took their one-day strike. In fact, there are some estimates that the government saved about \$5 million that day. Can the Premier confirm the amount of money that the government saved when the teachers were on their one-day strike?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, somewhere around \$3.4 million that day.

MR. BAILLIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, many Nova Scotians would like to see that money put back into our classrooms in new investments rather than just pocketed by the government. In fact, many teachers have been asking that that money go into classroom improvements for things like more EAs or real class caps. That's a lot of money. I would like to ask the Premier, as one way of making something good come from this mess that he's created, will he commit right now to taking that money and make new investments in our classrooms for things like more EAs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I wanted him to know the piece of legislation that's before him has \$20 million associated with it on top of the fact it's not for a committee, the honourable member knows better than that. He should stop sending the rhetoric around the province. That money is there to actually make a difference in classrooms across this province as we continue to replace the \$65 million that was cut by the former government. But I do want to respond to the question that \$3.4 million - and ask the Department of Finance and Treasury Board to clarify the amount - will go to the student grant programs that are across this province and it will go to the student body across this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party.

PREM.: BILL NO. 75 - PROGRESSION

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: My question is to the Premier also, Mr. Speaker. The Premier keeps telling us that he is listening to teachers. Well, there's thousands of teachers that came to this House to be listened to and they came from around Nova Scotia; they rode on buses for hours and they were disappointed that the Premier chose to run off without hearing them. I hope that over the weekend the Premier has had a chance to do some soul-searching, and I'd like to ask the Premier again, if he's listening to teachers why is he moving forward with this bill?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I, like all members of this House, went back to my constituency, had an opportunity to go out across my constituency, and have heard loud and clear from all Nova Scotians that they want this province to get back to fiscal health, they want us to continue to invest in classrooms, they want to continue to have us listen to teachers. This bill will allow for teachers' voices to be heard, and I would encourage the honourable member to stand up and do what he didn't do when he was in government and vote for education.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I think it's going to be an interesting evening. One of the teachers who was able to speak at Law Amendments Committee was Ron Nugent. Mr. Nugent is a guidance counsellor, a parent, and a neighbour of the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank. Mr. Nugent provides support for more than 2,000 kids and says this legislated contract shows no respect for teachers.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank won't return Mr. Nugent's calls or emails, so I'd like to ask the Premier, will he listen to Mr. Nugent and agree to return to the bargaining?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we continue to listen to teachers across this province. I will remind the honourable member that the executives that represented Mr. Nugent and all teachers across this province negotiated and settled on three tentative agreements that were rejected by two different executives.

What we have heard also from parents across this province and from students and from some teachers is that working to rule is impacting their classrooms. This piece of legislation is to end work-to-rule and it also provides an opportunity for classroom teachers to be heard directly by this government so that we continue to make investments in classrooms and improve the learning and teaching environment.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, the teachers who have gathered outside this Legislature and the teachers who are able to speak at Law Amendments Committee are calling on their MLAs to do the right thing for their constituents. The Premier has said that he hopes all members of this House will vote for this bill but he has not confirmed if it will be a free vote.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell the teachers if the members for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank, Halifax Atlantic, Fairview Clayton Park, and Cape Breton Centre will be allowed to vote their conscience on this heavy-handed legislation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to assure the honourable member that the conscience of every member of this government is clear every time we invest in public education and reinvest what that member took out of public education. The one thing everyone on this side of the House will not take is a lecture from that group that continued to assault classrooms across this province at every opportunity they had.

We have reinvested in classrooms. Mr. Speaker. Have we missed the mark at times? Obviously, we have. This piece of legislation will allow classroom teachers to have their voices heard.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EECD: CLASSROOM IMPROVEMENTS - INCLUSION COMM.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. When it comes to making meaningful improvements in classrooms, this government believes that a committee is the answer to everything. Instead of taking real action and inclusion, this government has, as predicted, proposed another committee.

My question to the minister is, why did the minister strike a committee instead of setting goals for inclusive education and working to achieve them?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. One of the things that this legislation does, which has never happened in the history that I know of, is we have classroom teachers sitting around a table making decisions. That's what classroom teachers want and that's what we have.

MR. DUNN: Mr. Speaker, teachers and parents are the hands-on experts when it comes to supporting students with special needs. They are key stakeholders in ensuring the classroom experience for students, and allows them to reach their full potential and get the learning experience they deserve.

My question to the minister is, why did the minister specifically exclude teachers from the Commission on Inclusive Education?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that teachers are in some challenging situations. They have children with very special needs. They certainly need supports, they

need professional development, and they need training so that they can best respond to those students' needs.

The whole review of inclusion will very much depend on hearing from teachers, hearing from parents, and hearing from anyone who has ideas about how we can best meet the needs of all the students in our class.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PREM.: NEGOTIATIONS - AGREEMENTS/SETTLEMENTS

HON. DAVID WILSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how committed the Premier is on negotiating with public sector workers in a fair manner. We see the ramification of his hardline approach with teachers which has led to the first-ever teachers' strike in 122 years.

Reaching an agreement between the government and union takes a commitment from the government to work in a fair and respectful manner. It also takes a willingness to genuinely want a settlement which both sides have negotiated.

I would like to ask the Premier, does this government want ratified agreements with our Public Sector unions or just imposed settlements through the heavy hammer of legislation?

THE PREMIER: We have negotiated three different agreements with two different executives of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union at the bargaining table. Each time, we moved from our position, put more funding on the table and gave up authority on how that funding would be spent, each and every time. He's absolutely right: you have to have willing partners to make those agreements.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Last week, the Premier stated that he is looking for labour agreements that satisfy workers and the taxpayers. I can't help but question that, given that this government is running on a three-year dry streak when it comes to labour negotiations. Mr. Speaker, 313 contracts with public sector workers have expired on this government's watch, and they're refusing to learn from their failures and change the way they negotiate.

I would like to ask the Premier, how can this government satisfy taxpayers when it has failed to do its job on 313 occasions?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as you would know, we have 10 agreements that have been ratified. We're continuing to work with our partners at the bargaining table. We look forward to continuing those conversations to find agreements that work for them and work for the government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

BILL NO. 75: LEGAL CHALLENGES - FUNDING

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: By his reckless actions, the Premier has committed the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to years of legal challenges and millions of dollars in legal costs. There have been three successful lawsuits launched against two different governments, all of which resulted in multimillion-dollar settlements.

I would like to ask the Premier, will he be setting aside a provision in the upcoming budget to cover the inevitable legal challenge?

THE PREMIER: I want to tell the honourable member that we had three different agreements with two different executives of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. Each and every time we went to the table, we moved. We changed the agreement, providing more support. We put more money on the table and gave up more each and every time.

I think even the lawyer representing the Teachers Union said this piece of legislation will stand the test.

MR. BAILLIE: There have been three different Liberal Governments that got sued successfully in two different provinces that tried to do the same thing that this government is about to do to the teachers of Nova Scotia. It is reckless and irresponsible to expose the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to millions of dollars of legal costs solely because the Premier could not get done through negotiation what every other Premier in our province's history has done.

The Teachers Union has been very clear that they're suing. Whether we win or lose, at the end of the day, we have millions of dollars of costs ahead. I would like to ask the Premier, how much is he setting aside in the upcoming budget to cover the legal costs?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member would know that all of those situations he's referring to are very different than this one. He would also know we've had three different tentative agreements with two different executives of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union at the bargaining table.

This is about ending work-to-rule. We need this contract. It's about giving teachers their voice. This piece of legislation will ask classroom teachers to come directly to be heard so that we can continue to invest in classrooms across this province. The Teachers Union will determine what they do into the future.

Our government is going to continue to focus on making sure we improve classrooms.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

BILL NO. 75: LEGAL CHALLENGES - B.C. INFO.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: No one is going to be happier than the lawyers of this province as they're about to find millions of dollars flowing their way.

In British Columbia, the government set aside \$100 million in their budget to cover the legal cost. They ended up having to pay out \$300 million. That's the road that this Premier is condemning our taxpayers to go down. Yet he won't say if he's setting aside anything for where we're inevitably going to go now.

I would like to ask the Premier, who is being more reckless with taxpayers' money, the Premier of British Columbia or the Premier of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: My job is to be the Premier of the Province of Nova Scotia.

We continue to invest in education, continue to make a difference. Obviously, as I've said, we've missed the mark in some places. I've heard very loud and clear from teachers across this province.

The union supported every decision that we made in the investments going into classrooms, but obviously classroom teachers felt that we were hitting the wrong spot. That's why this piece of legislation allows teachers' voices to be heard directly by government. We're looking forward to continuing to work with them.

There is money in this piece of legislation to be invested in classrooms. For the first time, we're going to have a conversation about inclusive schools and inclusion. We're prepared to make investments and continue down that road. He can continue to be bound and determined whether or not this is going to be fought in future courts and all that stuff. We're going to stay focused on classrooms and kids.

MR. BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it is going to be challenged in courts. That's already clear, and win or lose, it's going to cost millions. I want to remind the Premier that in three different successful lawsuits, two governments lost and had to pay out millions in settlements - millions. That's the road we are now condemned to go on because this Premier could not do what every other Premier in our history has done, and that's work out his differences with teachers without legislating.

I would like to ask the Premier a pretty basic question. Wouldn't it have been better to put that money in the classrooms in the first place, instead of sending it off to lawyers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the honourable member, but there's one thing this Premier is not going to do that my predecessors did: spend money that I do not have.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

PREM.: CLASSROOM VISITS - INVITATIONS ACCEPT

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, last week at the Law Amendments Committee, a number of teachers invited government members to visit their classrooms and witness the challenges they face first-hand. Challenges like dealing with students with behavioural difficulties, or like finding the time to mark and create lesson plans that meet the needs of all their students while juggling family life. After all, many teachers are parents as well.

My question is to the Premier. Will he accept these invitations himself - I repeat, himself - and try to gain a better understanding of teachers' views before passing this bill?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The honourable member would know that I've been in schools across this province over the last three years. She would also know that we've reinvested the \$65 million that they cut out of classrooms. It was one place I wanted to make an investment and continue to make a difference, to try to improve the outcome for students and improve the teaching environment for teachers.

We're going to continue to go down that road. This piece of legislation, which I hope she will vote for, will allow classroom teachers' voices to be heard here. We'll continue to make those investments as we work with them.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, it's time the Premier turned off that channel, because he knows it is not factual at all. He does. He can't even present that to this House, or table it, or the money that he's invested - supposedly.

With three - one, two, three - tentative agreements rejected and our first teachers' strike under our belts, one thing is clear. This government did not get enough quality time with teachers either. They were never consulted. Nova Scotians are concerned that this failure to consult will force more public sector workers to seek job action. Three hundred and thirteen labour agreements with public sector unions have expired under this government, and none have been successfully renegotiated.

My question to the Premier is, will he take the time to adequately consult public sector workers before resorting to legislating more contracts in the future?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member would allow me, I'd like to read a quote into the record. This is a quote that came from the former president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Alexis Allen, in June 2012: "... the last two years under the NDP government have been devastating for public education in Nova Scotia. We have seen the education budget cut by \$65 million and lost over 700 teachers. If

you feel as if you are doing more with less - you are and you will continue to have to do so, UNLESS the Dexter government re-invests . . ." its \$65 million.

One thing is for certain, Mr. Speaker. She can accuse us of misleading Nova Scotians, but now she's accusing the president of the Teachers Union of misleading Nova Scotians. The fact of the matter is that the Dexter Government didn't reinvest, and this Liberal Government reinvested in public education. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BILL NO. 75: OUTSIDE LEGAL COUNSEL - COSTS

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, the government has used outside legal counsel for the preparation of Bill No. 75 and possibly the December bill.

My question for the Chair of the Treasury and Policy Board is, what is the total the government has spent on outside legal counsel in preparing for Bill No. 75 and throughout the dispute with teachers?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I do not have those numbers and when we have all of our total bills I'm sure that will become available through estimates.

MR. YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, one element of the bill written by outside counsel is to create another committee. Yet the recommendations that were labelled urgent in the past couple of committees and panels, including one commissioned by this minister, have yet to be implemented.

What confidence can Nova Scotians have that any of the recommendations from the newest committees will be implemented since the old ones weren't implemented?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, one of the things we have made sure that we have on this particular committee are classroom teachers and we have also identified for that committee some of the priorities which we heard in Law Amendments Committee which came from teachers. Things like data collection and PowerSchool - those are things that definitely will have to be addressed by the committee. That's what we heard from teachers in the Law Amendments Committee, that's what we've heard from teachers on the street. Those are the priorities for teachers and we will respond to those.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**BILL NO. 75 - LAW AMENDMENTS COMM.:
EXCLUDED PRESENTERS - APOLOGIZE**

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, last week we witnessed an extraordinary example of people taking charge of their democratic rights. Hundreds upon hundreds of Nova Scotians signed up to have their voice heard at Law Amendments Committee. However, once it became clear that too many people came to disagree with the back-to-work legislation, the Liberals shut down the committee as fast as possible, leaving hundreds of people without their chance to speak, many of my own constituents.

My question is, will the Premier please stand in his place and apologize to those hundreds of Nova Scotians who called in and were denied their opportunity to speak at the committee?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. She knows there was Law Amendments Committee on Wednesday night, all day Thursday. We also provided an opportunity for her Party to join us to set up another parallel meeting so more Nova Scotians would continue to be heard.

She chose not to support that, not to allow her constituents' voices to be heard. I want to reassure her that we are listening to Nova Scotians. This piece of legislation will allow teachers to come directly and speak directly to government so we make the investments in public education.

MS. MACFARLANE: The Premier is basically deflecting responsibility and that adds insult to injury to the people who were denied. The Liberals prevented every action that we took to get more people to present at Law Amendments Committee. What they did negated the whole process of Law Amendments Committee.

However, we know that they abruptly left the table at 8:00 p.m., leaving a witness sitting at the table. Now we are at risk of turning Nova Scotians away from any further involvement in their government, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier please promise Nova Scotians that they will never again be shut out of their own House and the proper democratic process?

THE PREMIER: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to remind her that she voted against a decision in this House that would have allowed more people to have their voices heard. She chose to make that decision. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that the honourable member who asked the question could hear my answer because of the members in front of her who are screaming across the floor. I want to tell her what I said is that there was a piece before this floor that she

could have voted for that would have allowed more Nova Scotians' voices to be heard. She chose not to, she chose to support her Leader and deny their voices to be heard.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

EECD: EDUC. ASSISTANTS/SUPPORTS - FUNDING (\$40 M.)

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. The contract the Premier is imposing on teachers is expected to save the government about \$40 million over earlier contract offers. That's money that can be used to support teachers and make classrooms more productive for students and it is money the government was willing to spend in an earlier contract offer.

My question to the minister is, will the minister commit tonight to spending that \$40 million on more educational assistants and other supports in the classroom.

HON. KAREN CASEY: The legislation that is introduced and that will be passed certainly identifies \$20 million; \$10 million for each of the next two years. That's for the teachers to look at, how they can best use that to make sure that their concerns in the classroom are met. We have also said to them that when this money has been spent and if there are additional needs - as a department, we put forward our budget every year and we try to respond to teachers' needs through that budget.

MR. ORRELL: Mr. Speaker, the tactics used by this government with teachers have poisoned relationships. Teachers no longer trust this government and with good reason. Committing to using the \$40 million in savings will be a much-needed olive branch in a very tense situation. Why won't the minister satisfy the government's need to win and do the right thing for students and teachers?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, we are doing the right thing for students and teachers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

EECD: BARGAINING TABLE - RETURN

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, my question tonight is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Thousands of teachers have come to Province House to tell the minister what they think of this government's heavy-handed, legislated contract.

Teachers who spoke at Law Amendments Committee were very clear that this bill addresses nothing that they actually need. The only thing the minister has accomplished is creating a more toxic environment in education and a whole new generation of politicized,

energized, and angry teachers ready to use their voices and their political might from now on.

Would the minister please tell me is she willing to scrap this bill, go back to the bargaining table to negotiate without preconditions with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, what I'm prepared to say to all teachers, all parents, and all Nova Scotians is that we have listened to what teachers have identified as their concerns about working conditions and we have put a structure in place so they can be addressed.

MS. ZANN: Mr. Speaker, well, the minister and the Premier have both claimed ad nauseam that they have been listening to teachers, negotiating in good faith, and that classroom teachers will be on the proposed council. But they neglect to say that superintendents will be choosing those classroom teachers, nine of them, which means that management will still be in control of the council, and the union representation has been taken down from four members to one. So, if the minister really wants to work with teachers, why has the government been forcing a contract that is punitive to teachers including a worse wage package and worse payout option for the service award?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, all teachers were members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. There will be nine of them on that committee and that outweighs any other membership on that committee.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BILL NO. 75: LAW AMENDMENTS COMM. - TRUNCATION

MR. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the honourable Government House Leader. On Thursday, February 16th, the government cut off Law Amendments Committee at 8:00 p.m. in mid-presentation of one presenter when more than 300 Nova Scotians still wanted to present.

My question for the minister is, why was the Law Amendments Committee on Bill No. 75 cut short when it has been the practice of this House to hear every presenter at Law Amendments Committee?

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, it was clear Nova Scotians told us they wanted to see an end to work-to-rule because of the disruption that it was causing in the classrooms. At the same time, we had a strike action that was taking place on Friday; we had the possibility on Thursday that there would be strike action the following week as well, it was something the union reserved which it didn't exercise.

We tried in this House to do a first - to have a parallel committee that could have heard from more Nova Scotians. At the same time, the Opposition could have easily waived some of the notice requirements here in the House on the legislative process which would have allowed for more presenters. The Opposition was clearly more interested in playing games than hearing from Nova Scotia teachers.

MR. LOHR: Mr. Speaker, this government, to its credit, has gone through extraordinary efforts to hear every presenter on the Accessibility Act now before this House including a range in remote video feed from other parts of the province. My question for the minister is, why has such effort been put into hearing every presenter at Law Amendments Committee on the Accessibility Act and why was that not done for Bill No. 75?

MR. SAMSON: Again, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that Nova Scotians want to see an end to work-to-rule. We had strike action that took place on Friday, and there was the potential of further strike action taking place this week. There was clearly an urgency to have this dealt with.

I would urge the member to maybe talk to some of his colleagues who have been around before to maybe tell him what life was like under the Tory Government on Bill No. 68, or what life was like under the New Democratic Party Government when it came to the paramedic legislation. What happened is not the first time when there have been emergency situations; it has been done by their Party in the past.

We found options to be able to allow more Nova Scotians to make presentations. It was very clear that that member and his Party were more interested in playing politics than hearing from Nova Scotia teachers.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

EECD - CONCERNS: RESOLUTION DELAY - MIN. EXPLAIN

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the teachers will be feeling very motivated to volunteer their time after this. This contract ended in July 2015. Challenges have been developing in classrooms for years but this government also knew that a new contract would have to be signed years ago. Why hasn't the minister been working to address the challenges in the classroom long ago, to avoid what we are seeing now, which is a teaching profession that has lost confidence in this government?

HON. KAREN CASEY: I did answer a question last week similar to that one. I will give the same answer this week. My first meeting with the provincial executive on election in 2013 was to ask the provincial executive what their main concerns from classroom teachers would be. One of them was the size of classes and the other was the breadth of the curriculum. Both of those have been addressed. We have capped the class sizes from

Primary to Grade 6 and moving on into Grade 7 through middle and junior and senior high school. We have also had teachers in to help us streamline the curriculum so that it would be more manageable. Mr. Speaker, we listened.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, those are good changes but there are many others. What a lot of people are seeing in this direction by the government right now is that it is just another study. People are tired of studies, we hear this all the time. Students, parents and teachers need decisions. Decisions made after taking the time to sit down and listen and to understand.

Why does the government need to do studies, as we see proposed with this bill, when everyone else understands the challenges in the classroom and people have put forward ideas to fix those challenges?

MS. CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the member acknowledge that what we've done, I believe the words were "really good changes". They are good changes, no one ever said it was enough. We have to continue, that's why we've listened to teachers, that's why we are putting teachers on a committee that will allow them to give us the direction as to how we spend taxpayers' dollars.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party.

PREM.: ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES - UPDATE

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Court of Appeal has ruled that the electoral boundaries used in the 2013 election violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, yet just last week the Premier said he would be willing to call an election without changing them. His reasoning? The Electoral Boundaries Commission would need two years to complete its work. But there's a problem, that isn't true, the commission only needed half that time in 2012.

I ask the Premier, why is his government refusing to update the electoral boundaries that were deemed unconstitutional when an election does not need to be held until October 2018?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As you know, the courts made a ruling, we're looking at that ruling, we're looking at the Acadian community that actually went to the courts and had this ruling. We're going to continue to work with them to find a resolution going forward.

I want to remind the honourable member that the ruling he is talking about is one that his government imposed. I want to also remind the honourable member that what he is talking about is the fact the reason it did take so long is because he interfered with it, Mr.

Speaker, and ignored what the committee was actually saying. That's why the court ruled against it.

It's really interesting, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member wouldn't even run in his own riding - the community he lives in - after the new boundaries.

We will get it right, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from minority groups across this province, the courts have said that and we're going to do this in a thoughtful way to make sure that it reflects minority rights in this province and reflects what the courts have said.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, I ran in 2013 and I won. This government has over a year and a half to figure this out. It has a year and a half to act on the court's ruling and hear from the new Electoral Boundaries Commission before calling an election. Nova Scotians are left to wonder whether their MLA and electoral boundaries will change or not before the next election. This government has no clear plan to address this issue.

I ask the Premier, where is the fire and why is the government not calling an Electoral Boundaries Commission this week?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, he's right - he ran and he's running away from his record when he was in government.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

PREM. - BILL NO. 75: FREE VOTE - CONFIRM

MR. TIM HOUSTON: My question is also for the Premier. The Premier has repeatedly said this week that the vote on Bill No. 75 will be a free vote. So far, his Liberal MLAs have toed the Party line and voted in favour of this most likely unconstitutional legislation.

The last and final vote is coming up soon on this legislation. I would just like to ask the Premier, does the Premier still agree that this is a free vote? Will he allow his caucus to vote their conscience?

THE PREMIER: I would hope all members of this House would support this piece of legislation so that work-to-rule can end, so that we can continue to allow classroom teachers across this province to come in to have their voices heard directly by this government, and so that we will continue to make those investments in classrooms and continue to make improvements.

MR. HOUSTON: The Premier has said repeatedly that he has full caucus support, that every Liberal MLA supports his bill and supports the direction of this government. The people will remember that at election time.

We're just hours away from the last vote on Bill No. 75. It's the last chance for Liberal MLAs to do the right thing and vote against this bill. If a caucus member votes against this bill, will they see any sort of punishment, penalty, or sanction from the Premier for voting their conscience, including maybe not even signing their nomination papers?

THE PREMIER: It surprises me how mean-spirited that honourable member can be, when he stood in this House talking about this piece of legislation, talking about people with disabilities being in classrooms and why they're the problem.

This piece of legislation reflects what our members have been hearing across this province. This gives teachers an opportunity to have their voices heard. Why would the honourable member be afraid to allow our government to hear directly from teachers?

There was one thing that was clear when it came to negotiations (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

THE PREMIER: One thing was clear: after three tentative agreements with two different executives of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, teachers never felt they were represented by government or by their union leadership. This gives them an opportunity to have direct input to the changes that will impact their classroom.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ENERGY: FED. MARINE PROTECTED AREA (C.B.) - DETAILS

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: My question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. There is a marine-protected area in New Brunswick that is 7.5 kilometres squared. The province is home to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. We have one here. DFO has expressed an area of interest that is over 8,000 kilometres square, with a possible plan to create a marine-protected area here in Nova Scotia off the western coast of Cape Breton Island.

Fishermen and fisherwomen do not know what this will mean for their industry. Can the minister provide an update on what the provincial government is doing to get to the bottom of this?

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Actually, the Minister of Energy is the lead on this file.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: We as well share concerns with what has been proposed by the federal government. We have made it very clear that Nova Scotia is prepared to play its part. We have indicated concern with some of the proposed areas. In fact, a number of the proposals have changed.

What the member raises regarding the Gulf Nova Scotia region is certainly of concern to us as well, both from the fishery perspective and also the potential for any oil and gas exploration that might happen in that area as well. We certainly expect there to be much more consultation with the province on that matter and with all the users of the area in question.

MR. MACMASTER: The industry is currently worth over \$70 million. It is a significant portion of our provincial GDP. Of course, as we know, it brings export dollars into our economy. The industry is too important for political musings about its future.

Will our provincial government make a statement on behalf of our fishers that it will not accept changes by the federal government that affect their livelihoods?

MR. SAMSON: I indicated to the member in my first response that we share the concerns that are being expressed. We have expressed those to the federal government as part of the ongoing negotiations which are taking place. Nova Scotia already has Georges Bank which is protected, the Gully area which is protected as well, St. Anns Bank has been nominated for protection. We're certainly prepared to do our part but, at the same time, we want to make sure there are no areas that are being proposed that could have any detrimental effect to future and current growth of our economy in those areas.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

JUSTICE: NSTU NEGOTIATIONS - GOOD FAITH BARGAINING

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. This government has put forth a couple of reasons why imposing a contract on teachers will survive a legal challenge. However, analyzing those reasons, I'm concerned about the government's confidence.

First, the government is arguing that this current situation is different from what took place in B.C. because of the time it spent so-called negotiating with the NSTU. However, Mr. Speaker, these negotiations were clearly hampered by the threat of Bill No. 148.

I'm asking the minister, is she not concerned that negotiations with the NSTU lacked good faith, due to the threat of Bill No. 148, which in and of itself may be unconstitutional?

HON. DIANA WHALEN: No, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the question - it was asked last week and I think the first day that we were here overnight. I actually the next day spoke again to our Legal Services staff to get a further explanation of the bill and I was assured that they are very different in nature and that the nature of the loss in British

Columbia was that there was evidence that they had not consulted effectively and it's very different from this particular case.

MS. MANCINI: I wish I could share in the minister's optimism in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, when asked last week here in this House, the minister also said she believed the situation was different here in Nova Scotia than in B.C. because nothing was being taken away from teachers as a result of this imposed contract. However, this impending contract clearly limits job action related to work-to-rule and it eliminates the long service award for new teachers. I ask the minister, can she explain why she believes there is nothing being taken away from teachers as a result of this impending contract?

MS. WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this a little bit more. Certainly, in the briefing I had it was made very clear that what I said was true as well but that the actual ruling was made on the basis of facts and that what it was about was whether or not there had been good faith and effective and extensive enough bargaining in British Columbia.

Every case, as the honourable member knows, is different, has its own merits, and is looked at individually. The B.C. case was found not to have met those criteria. It also involved removing something from a contract whereas in our case nothing is being removed from a contract. Freezing is different than removing.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HEALTH & WELLNESS: SENIORS' PHARMACARE PLAN - SENIORS CONSULT

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: You know just five days ago the Minister of Health and Wellness during Question Period said that consultations with seniors would be a robust part of the Seniors' Pharmacare Plan going forward, yet today, on a province-wide holiday, the minister announced that these consultations would be put off indefinitely.

My question to the minister is, why is the minister ignoring voices of seniors?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the honourable member is that there will be full consultations, there will be a survey of not only every senior in the province but everybody 55 years of age who wants to help in discerning the next Seniors' Pharmacare Program in the province, and that certainly will take place.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, today he announces that the consultations will be held off indefinitely, which means who knows when he is going to actually be able to have those consultations, so of course seniors are questioning it. They don't trust their

government because of the mean-spiritedness of their changes last year and their backtracking on that.

My question to the minister is, will the minister fulfill his original commitment not to hold it off indefinitely, but to actually meet with seniors and hold consultations on this Seniors' Pharmacare Program, like he promised a year ago.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, we can obviously work in parallel here as we explore an Atlantic Seniors' Pharmacare Program as well as make sure that our next Seniors' Pharmacare Program looks at the next 10 years, not the next couple of years - and making sure that we get that right is important. Meanwhile, for 2017-18, 2018-19, there'll be no change for seniors. (Interruptions) That's right, the Opposition doesn't like the change because we help 40,000 more Nova Scotians.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

IMMIGRATION: SYRIAN REFUGEES - SCH. RESOURCES

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration.

Last week at Law Amendments Committee, we heard from several teachers who have welcomed Syrian refugee children into their schools. One of these teachers was Madonna Sampson, who currently has six Syrians in her Grade 2/3 class. Nova Scotia's teachers have not been given extra training or resources in response to the increase in Syrian refugees. Somehow Ms. Sampson's lesson plans are supposed to help these students adjust to their life in Canada on top of trying to help several children who are falling behind or who are struggling with behavioural issues.

I ask the minister, how can Nova Scotia claim it welcomes Syrian refugees when it does not provide any resources to support them in our under-resourced public schools?

HON. LENA DIAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you to my colleague for that important question; it gives me an opportunity to once again thank all Nova Scotians for the overwhelming response that we have received for welcoming our newcomers. Also, with respect to schools, I can tell you personally I've visited a number of schools throughout the province, not simply Halifax - elementary, junior high, and some high schools as well. I also have met with many teachers and many ESL teachers, English as a Second Language teachers, and I deeply want to thank them all for all the efforts they are making to help all our students. (Applause)

MS. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, they are making incredible efforts, as our teachers make in our schools every day, year in, year out, and yet there were 50 new students who

arrived at one school in my district last year and there were no additional resources - and that's for a school where everybody was already making extraordinary efforts.

I ask the Minister of Immigration who attended Law Amendments Committee alongside me last week, will she work with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to increase funding for more translators and ESL resources?

MS. DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my colleague, and all Nova Scotians, that we have been working extremely hard with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We've also been working extremely hard with a number of the departments within government. We've also been working with the settlement service providers in this province that have been offering wonderful services as well for the students, and they have been coming into the schools as well. I know the YMCA, the Y reached throughout the entire province have been helping the teachers, and we have hired through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development because funding has (Interruption) Yes, funding has flowed from the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration to the classes, and we have hired extra supports, and we will certainly look at that again.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

HEALTH & WELLNESS - PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my question through you is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Last summer, this government went through great fanfare to announce a Collaborative Care Centre for the people of Sydney. At that time, there was a meeting held in Sydney with over 1,000 people. Those people were concerned about the fact that they didn't have enough doctors. This government said time and time again that the answer was a Collaborative Care Centre, and they made this great announcement it was going to happen - so far it has been cancelled three times.

My question to the minister is, when is this government going to live up to its responsibility of making sure that there's a doctor for every Nova Scotian, as they promised in their last election campaign and as they continue to promise time and time again?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate at this hour of the morning the vigorous presentation of that question by my honourable colleague. We all know that recruitment for this particular year has gone especially well. We're in the process now of adding 22 more nurse practitioners and family practice nurses and we know several of those are going to the Sydney area.

We discovered that getting doctors at that point in the year was indeed extremely difficult, but I can assure the honourable member that he is going to see the benefits of an outstanding recruitment year.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During Question Period today the Premier said that the member for Pictou West voted against a government motion to split Law Amendments Committee. As you know, that is not correct, no such motion was properly put before this House; it does not exist and therefore, the Premier misspoke.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to order that that remark be stricken from the record, in light of the fact that the Premier has not been around much for this debate and probably didn't know what really happened.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll take that point of order under advisement.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, you'll recall that on Friday during Committee of the Whole House, the NDP House Leader brought forward an amendment dealing with the new teacher council and the mechanism to have an arbitrator set up as part of that process. I indicated at that time that we would review the question on the weekend because the language that was contained in tentative agreement no. 3 was different than the amendment that was being brought forward by the honourable NDP House Leader.

I can advise that we have taken the time to look at that amendment further. One of the issues I raised on Friday was that in tentative agreement no. 3 the issue around an arbitrator had a cap of \$250,000. I'll be presenting an amendment here, Mr. Speaker, in a motion for the House to consider. The two big changes would be to reinstall a cap but instead of the cap being \$250,000, it would be \$500,000, and also triggering the arbitrator, instead of being the co-chairs, it would now be done by the council itself.

Mr. Speaker, I would now make the following motion: I move that (1) Bill No. 75 be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills for the sole purpose of making it . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 75.

Bill No. 75 - Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in explaining the amendment and explaining what we are proposing today, in order to do so it requires the unanimous consent of the House. I will present a motion for that consideration.

I move that (1) Bill No. 75 be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, for the sole purpose of making the attached amendment, related to putting in place an arbitration process for the council to improve classroom conditions; (2) consideration of Bill No. 75 at the committee be limited to 30 minutes and at the end of that time a vote be held on the amendment and Bill No. 75 be reported back forthwith to the House; and (3) upon Bill No. 75 being reported back to the House, the House continue with third reading of Bill No. 75 forthwith today. I also ask for unanimous consent of that motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.]

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now recess while it resolves into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

[1:54 a.m. The House resolved into CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Mr. Keith Irving in the Chair.]

[2:35 a.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole has met pursuant to order of the House to consider an amendment to Bill No. 75, which amendment was carried. Pursuant to the order of the House, the bill is now reported back forthwith to the House, and also pursuant to the order of the House, the House shall now continue with third reading of Bill No. 75 forthwith.

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the order of the House, the House will now proceed with third reading of Bill No. 75.

[PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING]

Bill No. 75 - Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017) Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. KAREN CASEY: I move that Bill No. 75, the Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017) Act be now read for a third time and do pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

HON. CHRISTOPHER D'ENTREMONT: It's my honour to stand and speak in third reading on Bill No. 75 this evening at 2:37 a.m. I like underlining the actual time because when we look back at this for posterity on all the things that we've said in Hansard, it's kind of neat to see the actual times at which we've been up in this Assembly to debate certain bills.

For a refresher maybe, how did we get to this point? What part of this process is this? This is the last point in the process. Third reading is the point where all Parties get one more chance to talk about what they think about the bill, whether they're for it, whether they're against it, and try to set a number of reasons why they are in that mode. What will happen, too, is this is an opportunity for the Opposition to hold it up as long as it possibly can, making sure that we utilize the only things that we have, which are our voices and our time in this House of Assembly.

What has happened, too, is that the government - as much as we would like them to stand and speak - is not going to take that opportunity. I wish they would because there's a number of individuals on the government side who I know are probably having some

trouble with this bill. Most of them don't because most of them listen quite blindly to their leader and, therefore, won't want to say anything. So that's where we're at.

We've already had the first reading, which is the introduction of it. We've already gone through the second reading, and basically this is a recap of that second reading. We've already seen what happened in Committee of the Whole House on Bills. We've already seen what happened in Law Amendments Committee.

Law Amendments, I can speak to this for a few moments - the injustice that was done to the people who wanted to present to that. I know that the Government House Leader and the Liberal Party members will say we had the opportunity to see more people. Yes, kind of. Number one, there is no precedent of having a subcommittee on Law Amendments. There has never been that kind of thing done.

More to the issue, who is the subcommittee? Who's the main committee? How do you make a decision on who gets to see the subcommittee? Does it have the same binding power that the main committee has? How does that report back to the main committee? Does it not report to main committee? Is it allowed to make amendments to a bill in the subcommittee and refer that back to the main committee? There are so many pieces of unknown within what the government was trying to propose there that we of course had to say no to it because there is no precedence, there are no rules within our system to allow that to happen.

Now the point was that okay, if we saw 80 people or 85 people in the Law Amendments Committee in that period - so that was Wednesday night and Thursday - so in those two opportunities, even if we would have doubled that, we still would not have heard from over half of the people who signed up to be heard at the Law Amendments Committee.

We're saying we only heard, what? My math isn't the greatest - it's about 20 per cent of the actual folks who wanted to come and present to us. So how can we actually make decisions on 20 per cent of the actual individuals interested in presenting and what they are interested in - what they think is important in the bill, what they don't think is important in the bill, how they feel. Those are the things that are important to the people who come to the Law Amendments Committee.

Now I'm going to give tremendous kudos to the committee members, in this particular case, to allow CBC to do the live simulcast, or whatever it was called, that they were allowed to see it on Facebook, that people were able to watch the full proceedings at the Law Amendments Committee. That opened a lot of people's eyes, because they were able to hear the passionate presentations from those interested individuals, those teachers and parents and family members. They came to the Red Room to bring their ideas and their thoughts and feelings forward.

They also got to see the questioning mostly from the Opposition, but also some comments that were coming from the government members as well, and we were able to really present the feelings of everybody here. There were some occasions where those individuals called out the government members for not paying attention, for talking on their phones, texting on their phones. Then there was the option of making comments and how those comments from the government members, it wasn't necessarily questions on what they were presenting but it was trying to put the Liberal position forward of why they needed to be doing this and Nova Scotians got to see this for the first time.

We restrict what happens over in the Red Room quite often because of the number of people allowed in that Chamber - only about 60 people in total allowed in that Chamber, so only 60 people really get to see the true operation of the Law Amendments Committee.

According to the CBC, I believe the number was 114 or 141 - I forget, I kind of mix it up, whether it was 41 or 14 - there were over 100,000 people, separate clicks, that watched the Law Amendments Committee that day. That's a phenomenal number of Nova Scotians interested in the political process here at the House of Assembly. And I know that tonight a number of people are still watching what's happening in this Chamber, to see what everybody is saying about Bill No. 75.

So it is a little disingenuous that the government continues to blame the Opposition for not allowing that to happen, but to truly understand why it could not happen because of the Rules of this House of Assembly.

There has been a lot written over the last number of days about this particular issue. But, before I get into that I did want to present a letter. This is one is from Lois Landry She was one of those individuals who was unable to present at the Law Amendments Committee, so I thought I'd take the opportunity right now maybe to read through her presentation and then, of course, table it here in the House:

"Hello,

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak and offer comments about the current state of education. I made three comments which I fleshed out a bit here.

Inclusion:

While as a parent and teacher, I fully support the need for a dialogue about inclusion, I fear that that dialogue will be shrouded in what people don't want to risk saying. Compounding that is a glaring fact: if you put ten people in a room to debate the merits and challenges of 'inclusion', the conversation will likely go nowhere as those ten people probably differ in how they define 'inclusion'. For some, that policy implies that all students sit in

classes with their same-age peers; for others, it is captured in the statement 'only as special as necessary'. Those definitions are different and will result in very circular discussions if they're not lead(sic) well.

In the light of this challenge, it's absolutely outrageous to me that the province will appoint a commission to review how our differently-abled students are taught in public schools that will be led by 'experts' who are not classroom teachers (or parents). If the minister believes that three university professors can capture and lead discussion about what is happening in today's classrooms, then she is woefully unaware of the differences between today's classrooms and those in which she may have taught many moons ago. A commission that does not include, as part of the lead team, school-based staff, is doomed from the outset and runs the very real risk of exacerbating fear and distrust among stakeholders.

One Size Does Not Fit All:

This week's testimony at the Law Amendments' Committee has been the most compelling thing I think we have seen in public education in the past 25 years or more. To hear people talk about the pressing issues in their schools has been both moving and eye-opening for everyone (except McNeil's cabinet ministers, apparently). What I couldn't help but notice, though, is the vast difference among what teachers are reporting in different schools in the province. We do not, in fact, face the same challenges. Blanket policies like adding staff to eliminate split classes for instance, don't seem appropriate given the differences in challenges among schools.

One positive trend I've seen over the past several years is the introduction of pilot programs in select locations that can be implemented, evaluated, and improved for larger roll out. We've seen that with SchoolsPlus and Discovering Opportunities. I think that we should do more of that."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the honourable member not to refer to the Premier by his surname even in scenarios where you are quoting somebody else. You have to refer to him as his position.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that. When you get reading, you kind of read everything that's there in front of you:

“The government said they had sufficient funds in the public coffers to afford the third tentative agreement, yet are implementing the ‘less expensive’ second agreement. Why not use those unused dollars to allow schools and/or school boards to develop programs that would help select schools deal with their unique challenges. Create funds that can be accessed by schools to develop creative solutions to their problems that in turn can help other schools? We are highly trained and even more highly motivated. Let us come up with solutions to our problems. Let us do what we think will help and tell our stories about how it went.

Teacher Workload

What we’ve learned from the LAC presentations and several anecdotal reports is that teachers are exhausted and overwhelmed with the demands of their profession. Having worked in public education for more than 20 years, I - like everyone - have seen an explosion in workload demands over the last 5 years or more. What is even more frustrating is the fact that when teachers have been asked to respond to surveys and queries, they consistently report their inability to keep pace with the demands of their job. The current *Minister’s Action Plan* arose in response to the *Freeman Report*, in which teachers called on the government to recognize that workload was a significant barrier to those doing their jobs (*Disrupting the Status Quo*, p.26). And this report was commissioned as soon as the Liberals formed the government. The *Minister’s Action Plan* replaced the NDP Government’s guiding document, *Kids and Learning First*, which arose from the *Ben Levin Report* on education, which expressly stated that decreasing paperwork was essential to move the education system in this province forward. And yet here we are, years later, faced with even larger workloads and incapacitating volumes of paperwork.

What’s worse? There appears to be no end in sight. A retention plan that includes seemingly innocuous phrases like ‘in consultation with parents’, attendance policies that require ‘notifications to parents about attendance concerns’ most certainly do not change the status quo. They will result in an ever-increasing number of hoops through which we will have to jump, resulting in little change in circumstance other than an increasingly exhausted workforce.

Respectfully submitted by Lois Landry
January 18, 2017.”

I will submit that to you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of things held within this document. The inclusion one is one that I think we will be debating for some time in this province. Quite aptly, she suggests that everyone has a bit of a different definition of what “inclusion” truly means. Does it mean that everyone at their age level should be in a classroom with their peers? What kind of supports should be available to them? Just the basic definition will continue to have people questioning this for many years.

Having been on many committees, we know that when we get into definitions we can debate things for a very long period of time. There has to be a clear and concise idea of what it is. I would suggest to you that having a more community-based approach to this one would be best, insofar as having teachers and parents included in how this is actually going to roll forward.

Maybe there has to be a select committee of parents to set up the terms of reference for this commission to look at. To take only professors - and God bless professors, they're an important part of the whole education system as you move along. But they probably don't have the hands-on, day-to-day experience that our teachers and our parents would have in how the school system responds to the needs of those students.

I've spoken a number of times about my wife. Again, I am in a little bit of a conflict in this one, as my wife is a teacher. I know many members of this House have spouses who are teachers, and it's been a difficult situation for everyone. But as I've said before, my wife Anne is a resource teacher. She takes care of the learning centre at École secondaire de Par-en-Bas in Tusket. She's a phenomenal person who works very hard for her students.

The basis of the work she does is to make sure that her students - I think there are seven students in her classroom now, and in order to take care of those individuals, whether it's their intellectual needs or their medical needs, it takes two teachers. I believe there are six teachers' aides in there to respond to their needs. But you go to the next high school and they don't have that same kind of setup.

I think professionals like my wife - I wouldn't say to put her on the committee, but I would say it would be important to have people like her have true input on how the policy is struck across the school boards. There has to be some consistency, but at the same time there has to be some kind of capability to adapt to the needs of those students, which goes to the issue of “one size does not fit all.”

It puts in question the issue of school boards and their own specific policies, that it seems like depending where you are in the province, there are different ways that we react to the needs of students. School boards are busy on the day-to-day activities. They're making sure that they're meeting the budgets that are put forward by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. But they're also concerned about the pedagogy of the students, to make sure that the learning, the classes, those kinds of things are available to them.

But quite honestly, one board - let's say in Cape Breton - is going to come up with ideas and changes and issues differently than maybe the Tri-County board in Yarmouth would come up with. There is that difference between those school boards and how they react to these situations, which I think is why we have this silly debate about a no-fail policy, or the fact that there is no no-fail policy. I think it's a double negative or triple negative here.

We were quite surprised when the minister did her presentation, the release of Bill No. 75 and news conference, and basically underlined that there is no provincial no-fail policy. We hear from educators that one of their frustrations is the fact that there is a no-fail policy, that they have to come up with solutions for those students. (Interruption) Maybe there's no no-fail, but there is something called credit recovery where they come up with an option to give the student a few more points to get them across that 50 per cent line. I'm going to bet there's a lot of kids and students across this province who have passed their year with 51 per cent.

Is that being fair to those individuals? I don't think so Mr. Speaker. There has to be a mechanism in which those students who are not excelling and who do need the extra supports can get them. Sometimes that means the harsh reality of taking a step back and redoing a year. It happened in our time. It doesn't seem so long ago that I was in high school. It seems like a flash ago, but now we're talking 30 years. Yet it has changed dramatically.

I was talking to a friend of mine at church yesterday who happened to be my vice-principal and my French teacher way back when. He's been retired for 25 years now. He was saying that what he sees as the frustration is the lack of discipline, the kids who seem to pass without actually meeting the qualifications or the requirements of each class. He looks at it as being a bit of a quandary for him. I thanked him for his input on that. He is in that group of 25 years ago, which would have been the Savage group, who would have had the issues. He took the package at that time because he didn't want to deal with the outcome of that cut to education at that time. So one size does not fit all.

Even more, I have the opportunity to represent an area that has the CSAP as probably its main school board. Well, if you balance it off now with Barrington, we have equal representation with Tri-County and CSAP.

Mais avec CSAP, il y a des chose qui sont particulières aux eux qui ont besoin d'offrir des services d'un but du province jusqu'à l'autre. Donc, une chose qui a été soulignée l'autre jour était les psychologues, que vraiment dans la province, dans CSAP, il y a juste deux psychologues. Comment est-ce que deux psychologues peuvent voyager entre Sydney et Tusket est puis toucher et travailler avec les étudiants de ces régions ?

CSAP is an important school board in our province, and I'm lucky to represent it as well. But one of the things that was underlined just the other day, I think Sam Samson

was the one who said it, is the particular need of the CSAP because of its size. There are only two psychologists available to students in the whole CSAP. Those two psychologists - I think they are based mostly here - travel to all parts of the province. That means the wait-list for those individuals continues to grow. There are specific issues for different school boards.

One of the things that really surprised me, too, in the presentations over at the Law Amendments Committee - again, one size does not fit all because all school boards are a little bit different. From a psychologist standpoint, the ratio at this point is something like one to 2,000 students, which is about three times higher than what the actual average should be. That should be a ratio more like one to 500. So how do we offer those services or how do we get them on the wait-lists so they are able to receive the mental health services they require, that of course would help out in the day-to-day operations of the school? One size does not fit all.

Then the teacher workload was the last point that is brought forward by Lois Landry. I'm amazed at the amount of planning that my wife has to do. Of course, as I said, her job is a little bit different so her scheduling I think takes a lot of her time because she has to schedule those students with those teachers' aides every day to make sure that their activities are appropriate and able to move along. Just seeing how much she has to enter into the computer blows my mind. Putting into the programming - boy, attendance, specific points, the testing, and on and on from there, and then, of course, at the end of each semester to make sure that the proper inputting is done for les bulletins, for the school - I'm thinking in French again, it must be late at night. The point is that there's far too much of that happening now.

I think one of the comments we had at the Law Amendments Committee was even the attendance issue. Let's say that the school starts at 8:30 a.m. and there are a couple of late arrivers throughout maybe that half-hour. The teacher actually would maybe start by doing attendance with the students that are there and then as a late person comes in, they've got to go back over to the computer and enter them in that they came in late. In some cases, from the presentation received at Law Amendments Committee, that could happen two or three or four more times - that's going over to the computer, logging into the computer, logging into the program, making the attendance and then getting out, go back to teach, stop teaching, go back to the program, enter it in. It's a continual piece that's in the way.

Now work-to-rule over the last number of weeks, or the last couple of months, has allowed teachers to sort of ignore that part and actually teach, and actually teach full courses now. I think the kids actually have benefited in one way on the work-to-rule, where they actually are receiving the instruction they are supposed to be receiving.

Teacher workload - that doesn't include all those extra meetings that need to happen. We need to have meetings with our parents, they need to have meetings with the

principals, they need to have meetings - and it goes on from there. Of course, all that is done beyond the school day.

Of course, you don't want to be taking in a substitute teacher and going off and doing all those extra meetings, which do add cost to the system, but at the same time a lot of these meetings continue to happen after-hours, and there is no appreciation for that extra work that continues to happen.

Then never mind the voluntary stuff, the voluntary stuff that seems to be thrown on top of teachers over the last number of years of what they are expected to accomplish throughout the year, whether it's - and I'll use the CSAP again as the example - that many teachers are expected to participate in les Jeux de l'Acadie They are expected to be some of the coaches, they are expected to be some of the chaperones, they are expected to do all that extra work for at least a couple of weekends throughout the year, plus all the time that it takes to get those teams ready. That's just one example of those extra duties that teachers have to do over and on top of what I think we, as parents, took for granted and I think what the government took for granted as well.

Teachers are saying it's enough, I can't do all this now. The unfortunate part is I think that most of them are like my wife. As I said, I love her dearly but she's one who can't say no to those extra duties. She will figure out a way to squish that into her day, to the detriment of her health, the detriment of her family time, because she's duty-bound to make sure that her students are receiving the best education possible. That's the balance between what's been expected of teachers compared to what they're actually paid for.

Like I was saying, there were a number of articles that have been brought forward over the last number of days - a lot of opinions from individuals. What I'll probably do is just read a few points out of them, and tell you who they are from.

Nancie de la Chevotière - I don't know if she's here, but I know she was trying to get in earlier today - wrote a really nice article: "Opinion: 'Back to normal' is not acceptable and neither is dismissing democracy." We've said it too. "It took 122 years and [this Premier]'s Bill 75 to mobilize teachers in Nova Scotia to strike for the very first time." I'm just trying to read down here - I've read two articles that I wanted to talk about.

Below, she talks about democracy in Nova Scotia and how things seem to have been dismissed and how it strips away the rights for collective bargaining, as it was introduced; how the Law Amendments Committee was cut short; the insult to injury "during these emotional presentations when, instead of listening attentively to their constituents, [the Liberal MLAs] played on their cellphones" et cetera.

I just wanted to get to the point where she underlines "normal" in Nova Scotia - what is normal in Nova Scotia, that the Premier wants us to get back to:

Large class sizes

Lack of human and physical resources to support inclusion

Unmanageable classroom composition

The most vulnerable students will not have access to much-needed services (mental health, psycho-educational testing, speech language pathologists, etc.)

Teachers will spend too much time on data collection (PowerSchool/TIENET)

The government will continue to force provincial assessments that are both time-consuming and futile

Students will still not be accountable for attendance, proper behaviour or meeting course outcomes (although a no-fail policy doesn't exist per se, it is a clear practice in Nova Scotia)

She goes on quite a bit more, taking exception to what the Liberal MLAs have done. She does get to talk about the “broken glass” voters in the Liberal constituencies - these associations or groups that have sprung up. Again, Nancie de la Chevotière is a high school English and drama teacher in Halifax. I don't know if she's here tonight, but if she is - well, she's right. She's absolutely right in what she speaks.

The other one that I find interesting to bring forward is an opinion brought to us by Danny Cavanaugh and Hassan Yussuff, which was “Opinion: [The Premier] should backtrack now; pour money into classroom, not court battle.” That's sort of where the questioning from the Leader of the Official Opposition has been, the last couple of questions that he asked in the House of Assembly.

Just quickly, in this article written by Danny Cavanaugh and Hassan Yussuff, president of the Canadian Labour Congress:

“Is it possible to convince [the Nova Scotia Premier] to change his mind? We hope so, because walking away from the bargaining table and imposing a contract on the province's public school teachers isn't just going to hurt teachers - it's going to hurt the quality of education for years to come.”

I think we've been saying that for a while, that there has to be some kind of trust or relationship between these two parties to make sure that those classroom improvements are made, that their thoughts and wants and needs are actually heard and effected by the department.

Again, this is from the opinion piece:

We are both parents and have learned first-hand that it is teachers' passion and dedication that drives kids' enthusiasm for learning.

And it's teachers' commitment to their students - and their personal experience in the classroom - that makes them the best champions for the conditions that make or break quality public education.

That's why we're dumbfounded by [the Premier's] actions last week. He marked National Teacher Appreciation Week with legislation that erodes the ability of teachers to negotiate a fair contract, keeps wages behind the rising cost of living and guts long-service awards. The legislation also makes it harder for teachers to advocate for better learning conditions for their students . . .”

We get into the point that I think we've been trying to make for a little while - that this could be deemed unconstitutional.

“ . . . They also point out that when it comes to the right to collective bargaining, the Supreme Court puts teachers squarely in the right.

The Supreme Court of Canada has sent a strong message to every provincial government that negotiating in good faith and respecting the collective bargaining process is the law. Last November our highest court, which can take months to deliver a decision, took just 20 minutes to rule that the government of British Columbia had violated Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it used legislation to strip rights from teachers' collective agreement - legislation similar to [the Premier's] Bill 75.

The remarkably fast ruling ended a costly, 15-year war on education that was first waged by B.C. Premier Christy Clark back when she was the province's minister of education, and that sought to impose a contract on teachers that stripped them of their right to bargain class sizes and better support for students with special needs.”

It sounds familiar, Mr. Speaker.

“The ruling has forced Premier Clark to completely rewrite years of anti-education talking points, invest in education and hire 1,100 full-time teachers. B.C. kids will do better in spite of Premier Clark's actions, not because of them.

But it is the B.C. taxpayers who ended up footing the \$2.6-million legal bill for their government's strong-arm tactics. Why would

[the Premier] set up Nova Scotians for the same costly legal battle? Why not simply invest that money in a fair contract for teachers that will improve the public education system and the future for all Nova Scotians?"

In the view of a possible Charter challenge on this one, knowing that I think that beyond this one three different rulings from the highest court has deemed this kind of bill to be unconstitutional, why would we be going down this road in this particular way? Why would we be doing this?

I know the emergency that has been created here - and don't get me wrong, this has been created - the Premier can say all he wants that kids need to get back to the classroom but of course they've been in the classroom since December when work-to-rule first started. As I said earlier, they are actually receiving, personally I think, a better education because teachers actually have the opportunity to teach now, without having to enter into PowerSchool and TIENET.

As much as sometimes in my past life that I didn't agree with everything that Danny Cavanagh said, I agree with what he says here. I hope that the government lawyers and the Premier take it. (Interruptions) I didn't say I agree with everything, but I also respect his position on this.

I have 22 minutes left - boy, I know a whole bunch of people want to talk too. I just wanted to sort of maybe wrap things up a little bit here and take the last 20 minutes trying to tell you where I think things should be going. It has been difficult. Labour relations in this province have been getting worse over the years; they certainly are probably at their lowest that they've been in 20 years. There have been a number of anti-labour legislation from this government that has truly put into question how anyone can sit and bargain in good faith. It's not working.

We need to find a way to truly change the dialogue between government and the unions. This is not just the Teachers Union, this is all unions - that rather than opposing all the time, maybe there's a way to find some middle ground on lots of things. Maybe we should have a new dialogue begin with our unions because, quite honestly, they do represent - and I know my New Democratic Party colleagues are going to make fun of me here in a little bit, but that's okay. I think it's a good debate to be having here on the floor as well, that there has to be a new dialogue between the associations, the unions that represent our workers.

You know, when a nurse is feeling threatened, they should be able to talk to their union that can then talk to the government. When a teacher feels that they're overworked and need help, they should be able to talk to their union, and the union can then talk to the government and make changes. But, instead, what we have is a perpetual "us against them". I know the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board tried to have a little bit of a dialogue

at the beginning, and I don't know if it kicked off right or it kicked off wrong, but it just seemed to be, I want to talk to you because I don't want you to spend all this money. It was about a monetary issue rather than true working conditions and a new dialogue.

Maybe that's where we need to go. I think we all can be better served by our public institutions when everybody is on the same page, that everybody is duly compensated, that everybody is working for the betterment of our children - in this particular case our students - and that health care workers are there for our patients, that transportation workers are there to make sure that - and I thank them by the way for the last few weeks for the work they've done in keeping the roads clear. Our public sector workers really need us to listen to them, and I know that's through their bargaining associations, their unions. I think we need to find a better way to have a dialogue, and I think that goes on both sides of that equation as well, that we all need to be able to sit down in the same room and have a true debate.

As I finish off, I'll table these two articles that I printed tonight at the end, two opinion pieces that I think do set a tone of what we should be doing and how we should be doing it but again, to go back to the issue, teachers need to be able to teach. There was another article that I didn't print out that I was reading that if you take the teaching profession was maintaining a big barrel and within that big barrel were all the things that they did and for years they've been sort of adding stuff to that barrel. What was happening was, maybe there were some problems in retaining those things but teachers being teachers, they were really trying to find solutions and they were maybe stopping the leakage from those barrels by coming up with solutions. But that barrel is overflowing and there is really no way to stop that overflow unless government truly wants to listen to the issues that are being presented to them.

Trust is going to be a very important thing going forward. How are the teachers going to be able to trust government going forward when such a large bill has been brought forward that takes away their bargaining rights, that really doesn't listen to them? I know there have been some amendments suggested but quite honestly, Bill No. 75 doesn't accomplish what the government wants, it certainly does not accomplish what teachers want, and I think going forward it's going to hurt kids in class today because there will not be that kind of collaboration that should be happening between the parties.

Again, as I finished off last time, I again, to all those teachers that I interact with whether they be at the Tri-County schools, whether they be at the CSAP schools, whether they're in elementary school or high school, I want to thank them for the work that they do. As I've said before in this House of Assembly, I have two children. One happens to be in Grade 12 and getting ready for the next step in his life so I'm making sure and hoping that he gets the best possible education that he possibly can in this last year of his time in high school. Then there's my boy Alec who happens to be in Grade 9, and they are getting a phenomenal education regardless of all the stuff going on. It just goes to show that

teachers work really hard in there. They are very creative to try to work around some of these impediments, and I want to thank them for those years of dedication.

I hope they don't get too discouraged and leave the profession, because that's going to happen. That's what happened back in the 1990s - there were a number of teachers who truly got discouraged with the way they were being treated by the Savage Government at the time, and they left the profession. Losing those late-career teachers is a blow to the system because they have so much to impart on our children.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substitute the following therefore:

Bill No. 75, the Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017) Act be now not read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness on the motion to amend.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking of course on the motion to amend, to hoist this bill, to give some time for the public, for teachers, for us in this Legislature to give this bill some more thought.

Mr. Speaker, time needs to be taken. There are many classroom challenges. I know I raised in Question Period the issue of challenges in the classroom, and there is an opportunity for the government to show good faith to the teachers and to their students, and to those students' parents, to fix those issues instead of legislating against teachers, which is what we see with Bill No. 75 - instead of going out and spending \$20 million to study the issues. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, I'm being told I'm misleading the House, but you're not telling me that. The bill states clearly that there's going to be \$20 million to look at these issues. To me, that's a study. (Interruptions) Perhaps the other members who have been so silent can stand up and explain it all to us because they certainly have a right to stand up for a full hour and explain it, but I don't think we'll hear that tonight.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the government says they're going to end is the work-to-rule, yet how many of those activities that teachers are not doing now are really not part of their job description but volunteer activities that they're doing to support students? Are they going to be in the mood, after Bill No. 75, to do those activities, to volunteer their time? That's a concern I have. That's one of the reasons why I'm not voting for this bill, because I don't think it helps the situation - I think it poisons it further.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years two things seem to be coming alive in this city after midnight - one is the rat population and the other is this Legislature. We are in here

seemingly every few months after midnight and if it was the great Eric Clapton song, I might enjoy it.

We know why the rats are doing it - they are doing it to hide from predators. Perhaps the Government House Leader can explain to us the next time we're sitting in here after midnight why we're sitting through the night to discuss these matters. I could make all kinds of metaphorical inferences, but I'm not going to do that.

I have been home watching this debate from afar, recovering from a surgery, and I'm not really aiming to create even worse relations between the Opposition and the government or to add fuel to the fire. But I will say this: this Legislature should not be sitting after midnight, through the night, to debate matters that are important to the public. There's no reason why these debates should not be had during the daytime.

For the last couple of months, I've had a smell in my garage. I thought, what is causing this? In the Fall in Inverness County, farmers are fertilizing their fields. I thought, maybe I've driven over a patch of road where there was some manure that was being spread on the fields, that maybe caught on some tractor tires and is on the road. Maybe I've picked it up with my car.

Mr. Speaker, that reminds me a little bit of a friend of mine who was good enough to put out an election sign for me on his lawn. He also has an antique manure spreader on the lawn, and some of my other friends have said now he has two of them. I think we have to be able to laugh at ourselves a little bit. I'm going to get to what the cause of this smell was in a few minutes.

As I was telling you, I did have surgery recently, and I've been recovering from that. I've also gotten engaged since we last sat in this Legislature. After my surgery, Lucie has been very good to me. She is a registered nurse, and she has a couple of young boys.

Back to the smell in the garage, I took it upon myself to shine a flashlight down under the hood. What did I see but a rat? It was dead. I probably picked it up here in the parking lot because I don't think they get that big in Cape Breton.

In any case, I thought, what a good family bonding experience this will be to get the boys and her to help me remove this rat. I couldn't get it out. I reached down, and I just couldn't squeeze my arm through. Lucie took it upon herself without batting an eye. She put a glove on and reached down and got it for me. One of the boys was holding a flashlight, the other was holding a bag, and I was holding my nose. If she'll do that for me, what can stop us?

But I digress. Mr. Speaker, my point in trying to be humorous at this late hour - and I know some people are finding it humorous and some not - is that this Legislature should not be called to sit so frequently after midnight. There is no need of it. These matters are

important to people. We saw 400, I believe, sign up for the Law Amendments Committee. People wanted to have their say. This is the House of the people. We should be having these debates in the daytime for everyone to see, not hiding them at nighttime. I know there's lots of people watching tonight, and people may look at these debates.

But I think calling the House at this hour - I know the government will say the Opposition is playing games. Bills can pass quite quickly, pretty much in a week. What we are trying to do is to slow that process down a little bit so that the public can have their say, so that the public can even become aware of the issue.

We know in our fast-paced world that for a lot of people, it takes a little while for it to sink in as to what is happening. They might have to see it on the news a few times before they understand what is happening. Unless we're going to live in a country where the people don't matter and whatever the government decides to do, it just does - and there are countries like that in the world, Mr. Speaker. Unless we want to live in a country like that, we should be welcoming debate, we should be open to it, and we should not be calling House hours at midnight to hide from it.

So, is passing this bill going to generate any goodwill in this situation? I don't believe it is and that is why we've put forward this hoist motion to take time to review this, put it aside, and try to solve some of the issues in the classroom. You know, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, through the minister and by the direction of the government, they have the power to act on these issues and to make decisions and, you know, I know as part of this bill there's a plan to act on some of these issues but is that going to be seen in good faith by the teachers right now? I don't think it is.

You know, these things may have developed for many years but government has known about these issues. I know there was the Freeman report; there were a lot of issues in that that were raised that have yet to be addressed. Government goes into contract talks with teachers, with their union leadership and I know these issues are on the table; I mean, they must be, I'm not seeing them. I'm not in the room but there has been ample time for the government to address some of these issues and many of them don't cost money.

So when we think about - and I mentioned it already, the work-to-rule. That has been tough, that has been tough on students, especially I think of Grade 12 students in their final year. Not every experience where you learn is inside the classroom. There are many valuable lessons learned outside of the classroom in many of those activities whether they be sports or artistic or other extracurricular activities. Teachers are always giving of their time and their guidance to help students and to give them those experiences.

We know with work-to-rule that that relationship has changed and the question becomes, can it recover? Well, the government says yes it can - if the Opposition would get out of the way and let this bill pass, we could fix all of that. But the reality is many of those activities are not in the job descriptions for teachers. Those are things that fall under

the category of volunteer work. Those are things that fall under the category of goodwill, of teachers giving of themselves because they got into teaching to help young people so they can learn and not for whatever other reasons somebody might suggest.

It all depends on goodwill. The government has chosen this issue and I think they've chosen the teachers to fight this battle with because they think they can win it with public opinion but we've all had teachers and we've all benefited from them and we know the efforts they make. I know I'm sure I gave some of my teachers headaches in the past and I know that despite that they always showed graciousness in helping me in my learning, be it in the classroom or out.

My concern with this bill is that it's not going to - the work-to-rule is going to continue in another form, and that's my fear. If you feel disrespected by your employer, do you feel like going the extra mile outside of your job description? That's the concern. This government has a majority, and we saw in the last federal election the Liberal Party, 32 seats to 0, quite decisive. Certainly the people spoke, but you can't just run around running things just the way you think they should be run without listening to people. But you know what? That's the government's choice and they have made their choice with this bill and they will live with that choice whatever the result is.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to be supportive of this bill, and I think it's important that there is an Opposition in this House. I think it is important that we debate these matters. I know that if they don't get debated, there will be even less listening. My concern is about the work-to-rule, and the suggestion by the government that passing Bill No. 75 is going to fix all that does not wash with me.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, government can be fixing some of these issues - and I'm going to get into those issues in a little bit here. Any day of the week the government can decide to focus some of its direction and energy on addressing these issues. I'm sure they're discussed at Cabinet, and I'm sure they're discussed at the office of the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. There are all kinds of employees at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

I have heard that some of the problems in the classroom come from some of those policies that come from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. That may present a challenge for a government, or for a minister who is perhaps trying to change something in the classroom that may have been created by somebody in her department. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, that's where listening comes in, that's where respect for teachers comes in, and that's where getting focused and putting energy towards fixing problems comes in. Not just showing up with some legislation and telling people well, we've heard from enough of you, we're going to shut down the Law Amendments Committee and, by the way, Opposition, get out of our way, we want to pass this bill and you are only holding things up. I don't think anyone likes that kind of attitude.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I've been watching from afar, I've come back here tonight perhaps a bit ahead of my doctor's orders, but I thought that I should come in and put my words on the record about this and to support my colleagues here whom I know have been up through the night last week. They've certainly been a voice for teachers and students and their parents and anybody who is concerned about education of our young people. I thought it was important to join them.

Mr. Speaker, watching from afar I guess the first thing I notice is I've come in here tonight and I can tell immediately that relations are not good in the House - and who would expect them to be after a week of being up all night, every night? It's hard for that to not rub off on a person, no matter who you are. It's unfortunate but I guess that's the reality of life here in the Legislature, and that's the reality of people having differing opinions who spend a long time expressing them.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this. At the end of the day the government does have the power but it also has the power to be gracious, to use that power respectfully. I've seen examples where it hasn't. I saw an example this evening during Question Period - I guess I should say this morning since it is just about 3:40 a.m. - I saw an example where the Premier accused the member for Pictou West of not supporting a motion to have a second Law Amendments Committee meeting sit at the same time, of course, as our Law Amendments Committee meeting.

I thought about that and I thought, you know it's really not very gracious. Then, of course we raised a point of order that there was never even an official motion put forward for that and of course, I just thought it wasn't a very gracious act. At the end of the day, we have a Law Amendments Committee. The only reason the government was suggesting we have two of them was so that they could get this bill through the Legislature more quickly. Whether or not they hear from the other - I think it was 300 people who signed up to speak at Law Amendments - the action says they don't care, because of course we're past that stage with this bill. Here we are in third reading, and now a hoist on third reading.

I didn't think that was very gracious. At the end of the day, we're here to serve the people, and if people sign up for the Law Amendments Committee and want to have their say - and that is the convention of the Legislature here - they should have a chance to have their say. For the Premier to suggest to my colleague that it was her fault that these people couldn't have their say is ridiculous, and it's not showing a very good spirit. I know tempers flare, but at the end of the day, if we don't follow the Rules of the House, what have we?

The Rules developed for a reason, and we inherited them. When we exit the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we bow to you. We bow to the Speaker, or at least we're supposed to. Even if we don't agree with the Speaker or we're tired of listening to them talk, we do that, as one example of decorum here in the House.

I picked up a copy of the *Port Hawkesbury Reporter* and I was reading it - this was back in December - and the journalist described the Government House Leader as having a conciliatory tone toward teachers and the situation. I kind of smirked to myself, and I thought, well, that journalist is probably not seeing the Government House Leader here in the Legislature, because it is the Government House Leader, the member for Cape Breton-Richmond, who is quarterbacking this piece of legislation through the House. It is that member who was speaking on behalf of the government when the Law Amendments Committee was shut down before those other people could speak. Hardly a conciliatory tone, Mr. Speaker. I think that the government could be doing better here.

Another example, and I guess I'll call it what it is - to me, it seems vindictive for the government to have negotiated three contracts, the third one more generous than the first, and to then come into the Legislature and offer less generous terms than the most recent contract that the union executive and the government had agreed to. How do you expect to build a relationship with teachers if you say, "You wouldn't agree to it so guess what, you're getting something worse."

It almost reminds me of the worker at the visitors' centre in Port Hastings who, upon commenting about the expense scandal in Richmond, was contacted by her employer, the provincial government, and warned about her comments on the Internet, which were made as a free and private citizen on her own time, not on work time. To me, that's another example of government taking things too far. As I'd stated when we last sat, when I raised that issue, the comment she made would not be upsetting to somebody working in a government department, but they certainly would be upsetting to the member for Cape Breton-Richmond. So I could connect the dots on who made the request that she be contacted by her employer. I just don't respect that.

That kind of behaviour is not going to build a better province. It's not going to make teachers feel good about going off to school in the morning, and neither is Bill No. 75. That's why I'm not voting for it.

Some more examples: one was, in one of the earlier negotiations, the government had created a video for YouTube before the negotiations were complete. What kind of spirit of negotiation does that show? It almost shows that the government was fully expecting and wanting negotiations to fail, why else would they put a video before the end of negotiations?

I think about an issue just last week, the union, in a strike position, made a decision to go on strike on Friday. Substitute teachers were going to have a break in their term of employment, which was going to affect their benefits, and the response from the government was well, you better blame the union for that. To me, that was kind of small, Mr. Speaker.

Just a day or two later the government came out and said well, we're going to be the good guy and we're going to fix it for the substitute teachers. They knew that when they made the comments about the union, Mr. Speaker. So, if you have the majority and if you have the power and you can't be gracious, what's the point? If you have to take shots when they're not even necessary to be taken, what is the point? Is that being vindictive?

Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned it already here, like blaming the Opposition for the strike, blaming the Opposition for everything. At the end of the day I guess people can blame who they want but I'm here tonight and I'm standing up here at almost quarter to four in the morning and I'm going to be speaking for my hour. I'm doing it for the sake of democracy, so that people can be heard, so that people from the area I represent can be heard.

To me, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I deserve blame for delaying passage of Bill No. 75. I'll leave it at that.

I asked the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development tonight, the contract ended in July 2015. We're almost two years after that point now. Issues in the classroom certainly didn't happen overnight, they developed probably over the last 10 years. But going into contract negotiations knowing that some of these issues were important to teachers, to me, that would suggest that the government should be in a position to address those issues.

As I say, I wasn't at the negotiating table but seeing the result of Bill No. 75, being that the government wants to set aside \$20 million - and I know the members took offence when I said to study the problem. Essentially they're budgeting \$20 million to fix these problems but they haven't even identified what they are - my point being that the government had years to address these issues. The negotiations have come up, they've not passed with the support of teachers, and we still have the issues.

Really, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned to one of the teachers that this is the only time teachers can have their say. They said well no, we'll have our say in the next election too. That may be the case but it's during contract negotiation time that teachers can really press some of these issues. I think this is why this is so important to the teachers because they know, after this is over, and they may have their say in the next election, but until the next contract, if this is another four-year contract that gets determined, that's four more years potentially before they can really press some of these issues again.

Of course, the government has the power to do anything at any time it wants. It has that power but the teachers don't have that power. I asked the minister, why hasn't the minister been working to address the challenges? She says she has, she has provided a couple of examples. I said that was fine, but there are many, many more issues. I asked the question, why weren't some of these issues addressed or worked towards?

What we see now is teachers who have lost confidence in this government. I have no doubt that many teachers likely voted for members of this government in the last election. We know the results. They've got more chairs on that side than we have on this side, so I have no doubt about that.

But people I speak with at home see these classroom issues as just another study. If anything annoys people, it's delay, and it's letting things that need to be fixed continue and not getting them fixed.

A lot of people know what the issues are. I sat down with teachers myself. There was a number of issues, a lot of them very simple, very straightforward issues that we talked about that could be fixed. A lot of them wouldn't cost a lot of money.

One of them is the age by which children start school. Children are starting at a younger age now than they were years back. I started at age four. I turned five in September. I just made it in. My mom and I have discussed that from time to time. I've heard her express that maybe she should have waited for another year. Of course, what's done is done, and everything is fine. But I've always felt like the youngest in the class because I was. There were times growing up when I noticed that. I can only imagine children now, if they're age four or maybe even younger than I was, joining maybe six-year-olds going off to Primary, that that can present some challenges. Teachers have talked about that.

Every child is different. Some people feel their children may be gifted. I suppose we all would feel our children are gifted. But even beyond being gifted intellectually, there are all kinds of things, as we know, that children deal with growing up. Somebody starting off age four is not just two years younger in Primary. They're two years younger for everything else in life. At the end of the day, that is one of the issues that teachers raised, that they have a concern about children who are young, age four, going into school, and they may not be ready yet. That can bring up a discussion around what supports there are for children before they go to school, and that's a whole other discussion. The point is that that is an issue for teachers.

Of course, now with our school system, children are pretty much passed through. I heard there's some debate around this, that there's no official rule that if students aren't meeting outcomes, they are automatically passed no matter what. If children start young, they may not get off on the right foot. They may not get the supports they need. Quite frankly, maybe the best support they could get is not advancing them through. Maybe it's making sure they're ready to go into school to begin with. The problems compound. That was a very basic issue that teachers mentioned to me.

They also mentioned the attendance policy. I heard stories about students who do not show up for school. They know there's no consequences. Mr. Speaker, that's not good. We were all young once. I'm sure we all liked to push the limits. Even in those days, I know that we respected the system more knowing that there were limits and there were

consequences. How can you respect a system that has no consequences? I don't think you can.

Having an attendance policy is very basic, and if students are doing well or there's an instance that requires some discretion by the teacher, that's fine. But generally speaking, there should be a pretty firm attendance policy. I won't get into specifying what that should be, but I know the teachers I spoke with, just as a round number we said 90 per cent of classes should be attended - and, of course, they all should be attended if somebody is healthy and able to be at school, but even something like 90 per cent would be a significant improvement from what's practised now in the classrooms of our province.

It also sends a message to the students who are attending class and who are following the rules, the unwritten rules like participating and showing up for school and showing up for work and taking responsibility and acting like adults should act. They may be young people, but they certainly have a capability of being very mature if they're given good guidance and if the system rewards them for it. But, instead, good students show up for all the classes and somebody else can miss them all and there's no consequences. So, that is something that came up.

We also talk - and this is one I want to be careful how I address it. It's not easy for a young person. I can only imagine what it would be like not to pass a grade and the emotions that go with that are not easy, and oftentimes for young people there may be something going on in their lives, whether it's at home or whatnot, that it's distracting them from their learning, and things may not turn out well. They're not able to do well. They don't learn the objectives. But right now, Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is keep moving them through the system. If you ignore a problem and just gloss it over and don't address it and don't provide the help, to me, that is not a pass; that is a fail.

Young people need to be helped. They don't need their world to be glossed over and not have to face reality. They need support, and I think sometimes support means holding them back, but very carefully, very supportively so that they can develop. If they need to recover some ground, give them time to recover it so they can move on, so that the next grade doesn't become the same and that one get glossed over and so on and so on, because the result - and teachers will tell you this - students are not meeting the objectives. In some cases, they're not learning and they're coming out of school - they might have a Grade 12 diploma but they don't have a Grade 12 education. We're not doing them any favours in that case.

Something else that to me is very basic is giving teachers the power to establish and enforce rules for things like homework and assignments. Again, if there are no consequences to these things, what can we expect? If we're rewarding students by saying it's okay, and it's okay you didn't do your homework last night, you didn't complete the assignment, it's okay, we're not going to do anything to punish you, you were out, you know, you were watching TV or you were on the Internet and you weren't bothering to

spend your time studying, that's okay. We're going to reward you. You can keep moving along through the queue; we're not going to stop you, and there's not going to be any consequences.

Mr. Speaker, that's very basic and it amazes me that teachers would raise that as an issue to me and say that is a problem for them. They are trying to work within the system, the system given to them by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Of course, who is in charge of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development but the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the government. They may not have created those things but this government has been in power for just over three years - three and a half years now - and at some point in time I heard them blaming our Opposition colleagues here today. At some point the government has to take responsibility itself and, at the end of the day, has to own some of these things. You can't change something until you own it.

Life has consequences, Mr. Speaker, and part of education should be teaching students how to make good decisions that benefit them. Part of that is having rules for homework and assignments and giving teachers the power to enforce those rules - pretty basic.

Mr. Speaker, if marks and attendance don't matter for students, why should discipline? Changes made to attendance and marking policies should lead to better student behaviour.

We heard stories from teachers. The area I come from and represent is a rural area and I think we're kind of lucky around here because from a small area, where there are strong community supports, or at least a history of community supports, that plays into the culture and the support for young people.

I think of my old school, Judique-Creignish Consolidated, it no longer exists, Mr. Speaker, through amalgamation it was closed. I remember columnist Jim Meek writing an article - this was I suppose probably about 15 years ago or more now. I remember him writing about the wonderful record of achievement at Judique-Creignish in terms of students passing and graduating - a very, very high percentage. I think that comes from the teachers there, from perhaps an education system at that time that let teachers teach more and no doubt from the community. I remember our school in Judique was supported by the community. There were people who did not have children who came to the school and participated in school events. That's pretty special. It was part of the community.

I know we've had a lot of schools in the province closing since then and population declining in the province, changing the economics behind the schools that we have and had, now that some of them have been closed, but there was certainly something special about Judique-Creignish school, and of course Jim Meek recognized that.

My point in raising that, Mr. Speaker, is that things have changed and maybe they need to change back to the way they were with some of these things. I don't think I'm going to get into it because I can't speak for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development why things have changed. I could speculate but I don't want to waste my time doing that, I don't want to do that. I think of things like technology and we all think technology is so important, but at the end of the day we still have brains. Maybe technology can stimulate brains but sometimes I think we put too much focus on technology to be the brain for us and we still need to be creative.

Teachers, when they are teaching - and you know I see this, too, with things like people coming out and saying we have to measure everything. Well that's fine, you have to measure. I've talked tonight already about having to measure students whether they've met outcomes so they can pass to the next grade. I think that's very important but beyond that, you know, measuring things and this infatuation with the measurement of everything and recording of everything - you know if you're building automobiles, Mr. Speaker, and you have to have, you know, you have robots building them and you need things to be perfect so you can reduce mistakes, well that's fine but we're dealing with children here and young people. I think about technology like PowerSchool; well, it might be wonderful technology but if it's drawing resources away from teachers that could be spending instead on students and teaching them and spending extra time with them, then, maybe technology like PowerSchool at least for elementary school is unnecessary.

Maybe it's not adding any value and somebody probably made the decision to go with it so, they probably feel they have to make the decision now to justify it but if something is not working, it's time to let it go. That's one thing I heard from teachers and teachers who they've taught all day, they come home, perhaps they've prepared for the next day after school, or perhaps they've been out with the volleyball team or the soccer team or some club in the school helping students. Then, they come home at night and, you know, while they're getting ready for the next day, they're punching numbers into PowerSchool, hours and hours of that and perhaps for very little value, perhaps having very little outcome for students.

I've kind of mentioned it already about this infatuation with measurement and the standardized testing and I think of another one and this is of course everybody wants to say well, we have to measure our achievements so that we can say that we're being successful; and, the school boards are no different and I know they've come up in our area they've come up with a Literacy in Progress.

Certainly, the aim is a good one, it means well. But, you know, if children had to meet outcomes on tests and assignments and on homework and they were passed because they met those objectives, why would we need something like Literacy in Progress? Instead, there are no consequences for tests and assignments or homework and people can still get passed through a grade. We have something from the school board now called Literacy in Progress to help to make sure the children are learning to read. Well, I guess,

we probably need that because we don't know if they're learning to read when they pass them into the next grade because we don't know if they've met the reading objectives but I tell you, Mr. Speaker, Literacy in Progress was raised by teachers as an issue and, of course, while the aim is to make sure teachers are learning to read, teachers are spending time documenting this Literacy in Progress outcome material for this measurement and that is taking time away that they could be spending on students teaching them and energies they could be putting into their classroom and teaching.

So, the government with this bill, and I'm going to turn it over to my colleague here in a moment but we are asking for a hoist here on this bill to delay its passage so that some of these issues can be addressed to restore faith for teachers in the education system and I think even probably to save some money. You know, we see an amount of \$20 million in this bill. Maybe some of these issues can be solved without getting into spending those sums of money. The government talks about restoring \$65 million in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; well, inflation alone would require those kinds of contributions over four years. It wouldn't necessarily offer any added bonus other than protecting the cost of education from inflation.

But then they're going to turn around and spend one-third of that in this bill. Members opposite took exception before when I referred to it as studies. But I've used that, and a lot of people feel the same way. The first time I heard any opposition to it was in here.

We are asking that this bill be hoisted. I think teachers deserve better. Passage of Bill No. 75 is going to spoil relations further. I don't think it's truly going to address the issue of work-to-rule. I'm fearful that teachers are going to be very offended after this bill. I shouldn't speak for them, and I won't any further.

I'm fearful that passage of this bill is not going to make all the problems go away as this government suggests. I feel that letting the government off the hook here right now is not going to address the problems in the classroom either.

With that, I'll take my place.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'm glad to rise this morning to speak on this hoist motion. I'm glad the PC caucus brought this forward. We had one prepared also to move in third reading of Bill No. 75. Of course, under the rules, you're only allowed one hoist motion at third reading, so we're glad to be able to speak to this.

We do support the fact that there are many reasons to delay the passage of this bill. In the motion, I believe it was six months. There are many reasons, I think, the current

Liberal Government could look it at and have a chance to come to its senses and agree to move forward with a delay and to return to the bargaining table.

We know that the current government, at times, has been unreasonable when suggestions come forward, when amendments come forward, or when teachers themselves or the union try to get across to the government that ramming Bill No. 75 through the House is not the most productive way to achieve what I would think the government wants to achieve. I would hope that that is better classroom conditions, better relationships with teachers, and the ability for them to teach our students and our kids here in Nova Scotia.

I think it was last week that the Premier indicated, when they tabled Bill No. 75, that Bill No. 75 was going to pass with no amendments, that we're moving forward with it. Towards the end of last week, our caucus presented an amendment to Bill No. 75 in Committee of the Whole House on Bills to try to at least improve the bill, a bill that we don't support. But as I said earlier on when there was an amendment made, I think as an Opposition Party, we want to see the best in public policy. We want to see the best in legislation.

Just opposing everything, especially with a majority government, I don't think is really the correct way to approach government legislation. That's why we looked at what we could do. We know the government. The Premier had stated quite clearly at the start of this that they weren't going to entertain any amendments, but we thought, which one could have an impact if the government chose to amend the bill? That's why we presented the amendment around the council to the Committee of the Whole - the makeup and the ability for that council, once created, to go to an arbitrator if there was an impasse while they were trying to look at what recommendations they could bring forward that would improve classroom education.

Of course, on Friday there was no support from the government at the time. I know the Government House Leader took our amendment and worked for a number of hours - I think it was through the evening, or the early morning - I think it was about 3:00 a.m. when I was up speaking on that amendment. Unfortunately, they would not commit to supporting it, but did say they would look at it throughout the weekend, and they did so. We got word earlier, or late last night, that they would be moving forward with the amendment that we brought forward, with a couple of changes to it - we outlined them when we talked about that earlier, when we reverted to Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

That shows that the government paused for a moment, that they realized, I would think, that maybe they don't have all the answers to addressing the issue that is in front of us, especially with the negotiations with the teachers. Maybe they don't have all the answers on how to improve classroom conditions. How do they address the issues, for example, that so many teachers brought to our attention in Law Amendments Committee, the concerns that parents brought forward and that teachers brought forward? It showed that the government paused over the weekend.

I'm quite aware of the sheer emails and correspondence that I've received as an Opposition member, one who was very clear at the start of this that I did not support Bill No. 75 and that I still don't support Bill No. 75. But if I was receiving that correspondence through many forms - through Twitter, through texts, through email, through Facebook, through telephone calls, and through interactions over the last few days - government members must be getting those correspondences and those interactions with community members of their own.

So the government paused for a moment, and tonight, or early this morning, government decided, "Okay, let's accept that amendment. Let's tweak it a little bit. Let's put a cap on it of \$500,000, and let's move forward with it." That alone shows the ability of the government to change direction, to pause, to rethink the approach they've been taking all week. As I said, the Premier said it was going forward with no amendments; on Friday, we were able to break the Premier down to say, "Well, over the weekend we'll look at it"; and then of course this evening, or this morning, the change of mind and the change in the bill to amend it.

Will that answer all the concerns that people have with Bill No. 75? No, but it is a little better than it was a week ago, when it was introduced.

It gives the opportunity, again, with this motion, this hoist, for the government to say, "Okay, wait a minute. Should we put the brakes on this? Should we look at how to achieve a goal of improving classroom conditions, of improving the ability of our students, the kids in this province, to receive an education that is the best it can be?" We heard time and time again how frustrating it is, especially for educators in our province, with the conditions in the classrooms. Time, Mr. Speaker, is definitely a powerful thing. People say time heals wounds, time allows for reflection. I don't think the government's approach to reconvene this House and the Legislature just days after the last tentative agreement was voted on by the membership was the approach the government should have taken.

It's understandable that the government is frustrated, I can understand that. However, I don't believe that putting together a contract and imposing it on the teachers in a hurried fashion is the answer. I believe the government needs some time to reflect, some time to figure out if this is the right approach. It's often said that when contract negotiations break down there should be a cooling-off period.

Mr. Speaker, here's a motion that will allow that, allow both sides to take a step back and try to figure out how to move forward in a productive way. I think delaying this bill could allow for that to happen.

We've seen examples in the past, as I've said one just on the weekend, that the government kind of stepped back a bit on moving forward in a certain manner. I think we've seen situations where delaying making an important decision for a period of time

could end up with something that would be more satisfactory on both sides, when that cooling-off period has been so important in so many negotiations throughout the years.

I don't doubt that if you look back at the 122 years - of course, we know it's 122 years that the Nova Scotia Teachers Union has been able to negotiate a contract with whoever is in government, without going on strike - that potentially there has been a cooling-off period. Just because they haven't had a strike doesn't mean there weren't tough negotiations. There have been in the last almost-14 years that I've been here in the Legislature under a number of governments - under our government, Mr. Speaker.

It's tough. It takes a lot of work to get to a point where you have not only the employer or the government but you also have the employees, or the teachers in this case, agree to a contract. Cooling-off periods have worked extremely well in the past and, as I said, if you go back in history and you spoke with some of the people involved in the negotiations over the last - well you can't go back 122 years but you can go back quite a few - there have probably been cooling-off periods. I think the results of that would be some negotiated agreements without imposing a contract, without taking the rights away to a bargaining unit, like Bill No. 75 does.

When it comes to the current Liberal Government, Mr. Speaker, a little time has helped this government come to its senses before. I know after the second tentative agreement was rejected by NSTU members that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development had indicated at that time that, "The collective bargaining process has run its course. This is the second time we reached a tentative agreement with different bargaining teams from the NSTU that was rejected by the membership. We will not be returning to the table, we now await the union's decision."

Mr. Speaker, we know now that after taking about a month to consider those options and the minister's options, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development reached out to a conciliator, asking the conciliator to invite both sides back to the bargaining table. It seems that at that time, time had helped the minister come to her senses and agreed to return to the bargaining table. As I said earlier, that's a powerful thing. It's another example of the government, when they took the time, changed course, paused, and moved forward with an option that's not heavy-handed like legislation - like Bill No. 75. Mr. Speaker, that's not the only incident where a little time has helped this government make the right decision and alter their course of action.

On January 15, 2015 - I think we spoke about this a little bit in question period from my colleague - the government rolled out a plan to make changes to the Seniors' Pharmacare Program. They attempted to sell it as a good-news story; I remember the news conference. They pointed out that 12,000 seniors who previously paid a premium would no longer have to, and they point out that another 29,000 seniors would pay a reduced premium. However the government failed to mention that seniors would pay \$10 million dollars more to access their prescription drug plan, and the Liberal Government would pay

\$10 million less. They also failed to mention that more than 40,000 middle-income seniors would see their premiums increase by at least 15 per cent and some as high as 200 per cent.

There was a huge backlash. I received many, many calls from seniors in my community. What did the government do? They hit pause. They retreated from that kind of rollout and the decision to make those changes when they realized the impact that that decision was going to have on seniors in our province. So they showed again that there is a willingness to stop moving forward with an initiative. I think that was announced - well, it was January 15th. They didn't stop until I think we got back into the Legislature for the budget of 2015 or pretty close, then they realized that, wait a minute, we may not be doing the right thing.

I heard it again tonight - or this morning - when my colleague asked the question about seniors' premiums and the Minister of Health and Wellness stood up in this place, right there like he did a couple of years ago and said, there will be no increases for Seniors' Pharmacare. He said that three years ago and then, the year later, they were bringing forward this new program that would have seen an increase in Seniors' Pharmacare. So he said it again today, and I hope he doesn't blame me for not believing him. That's why there's a bit of frustration now when we the news today that the government will hold off consultation with seniors, which they agreed to do.

It also happened a number of times other than the ones I just mentioned. I believe it was in the first session of the new government, bringing forward proposed legislation of addressing flavoured tobacco, something that I think most people in the Legislature were on board with. Of course, we saw the bill and then it got to the Law Amendments Committee, and we thought the government was going to bring some amendments to it that improved that legislation and strengthened it. But really, they gutted it, and the government had to retreat on that legislation and brought back new legislation in the next session.

The point of bringing up a number of those examples is that it's in the government, the ability to press pause. The ability to say wait a minute, maybe we're not doing the right thing, maybe we're not approaching the situation in the best manner to get the best result.

Now if the government's intention for Bill No. 75 is just to look at the bottom line of the province and balanced budgets, then maybe that's why they're going forward with this. But if the intention of the government is to improve the situation in our classrooms, then Bill No. 75 is not the approach they should be taking. They should be listening to those 80- or 90-some - I think it was less than 100 people who presented at the Law Amendments Committee, even though there were many more people who wanted to speak. One by one, they came forward. They were teachers, they were parents, people concerned with how the government was approaching this situation. They were trying to get across to the government members who were on that committee that the situation is much worse than I think they may have thought it was.

I learned myself some of the strains that teachers are under. I thought I had a good grasp of what was going on in a classroom. I've said before that I have a son in Grade 10 and a daughter who just finished Grade 12 last year, who is in university now. We're engaged parents, my wife and I; we're at the school and we know what's going on. But I've learned quite a few things about some of the challenges teachers have in the classroom by listening to them at Law Amendments Committee, by reading the emails and the Facebook posts that I've received over the last couple of months and really over the last year. It gives you the ability as an elected official, no matter what side you're sitting on - if you're on the government side or on the Opposition side, or if you're an Independent - it gives you an opportunity to really hear from people who live it every day and can explain what the challenges are.

Unfortunately, I don't know why the government would try to restrict that, why they would try to rush it through and not allow those people to come forward. It's a process that I have always stood up and said that I'm very proud of in this province that we have the ability to bring legislation to the floor of this Legislature, bring public policy and have it go through a process where the public can actually come in and talk about it. I don't believe that's in every province or territory in the country. That's important; we need to protect that and we need to make sure people do have the opportunity to be heard. Often that's what they want.

I think the biggest anger I've read over the last couple of days from some of the people who contacted me is that they just couldn't get into the Law Amendments Committee, even though they think that maybe things would not have changed, at least they would have been heard. That was the frustration we heard. That's why our members and the Progressive Conservative members on the Law Amendments Committee stayed after the abrupt closure at eight o'clock on Thursday when there were still people in that room, and honestly, there were only about four or five more who wanted to speak. But no, eight o'clock came and we couldn't keep it going. Why? We had to report it back to the House at nine o'clock because then it could be considered the next day at 12:01 a.m., on the order paper. If it wasn't reported back, then it delays it by a day - one day. One more day of hearings that we could have allowed at the Law Amendments Committee.

To be truthful, it probably should have been about three days because we should have had the Law Amendments Committee at a normal hour, especially to allow teachers to present after school hours, because that's where they're at every day. That's why there's not a lot of noise going on this morning, compared to the other day, because teachers are home. There may still be some in the Legislature and around the Legislature here, but most of them are home now because in about two or three hours they'll be teaching our kids, our students, and they're dedicated.

I've heard from many who will be back as soon as 3:00 p.m. or 3:30 p.m.; they're coming back to the Legislature. So if the members opposite don't know how long we're going to be here, we're at least going to be here so the teachers can get back and make sure

that they have one more kick at the can, to try to get the government to realize that this is not only in the best interests of the teachers, and it's not just about the contract. It's about the conditions that these men and women teach in every day. I hope, as we go through this process, the government and the government members realize that it's okay to put the brakes on. That's why we have the ability in our rules and regulations and all the rules that pertain to the session.

We have a bunch of rule books. Even after almost 14 years, I'm still learning every day, new ways of trying to make sure that we're doing things in an appropriate manner. We have the assistance of the Clerks, of course, who know the rules inside and out, and I appreciate their support when we have questions.

There's an ability for us in the Legislature of Nova Scotia to request the hoist, to make a motion to ask the government to hold off for six months so that we can have that cooling-off period. It's in the rules, and it's in there for a purpose. I think whoever wrote the rules, and they've been around for a long time - we have the oldest Legislature in the country right here - realized that government does not have all the answers. I think opportunities like moving a hoist, referring a bill back to a committee, and dilatory motions allow for sober second thought on proposed legislation.

What we do here in this Chamber is important. We make rules, policies, and laws that people have to live by after they're given Royal Assent and they're proclaimed. It doesn't matter if it's a contract being negotiated or imposed, or if its legislation dealing with emergency vehicles on the side of the highway that requires drivers to slow down and move over to an open lane - which is a good piece of legislation by the way, Mr. Speaker. It's a safety piece of legislation. I'm very proud to be able to bring that forward. It doesn't matter if it's dealing with that or dealing with a contract, once it passes through this Legislature, it becomes law.

This is important stuff that we deal with, and I don't know if everybody understands that and understands the importance of making sure we get it right, making sure whoever's in government gets it right, and if it's not right, that we try to improve it, that we try to change it, or we try to ask for a delay, a pause, a cooling-off period. That's what the motion brought forward by my colleague does this morning. It's requesting that we take six months I would hope for the government to step away from the charged environment that we're in right now.

I don't know how else you can describe it. It's very charged. People are very passionate about this. They're concerned about this. And it should be concerning to the government that it's from a group of people who tend not to be charged and active on labour issues.

There have been a lot of strikes over the years. There have been a lot of labour disputes. Heck, Mr. Speaker, we've had Bill No. 1; we've had Bill No. 37; we've had Bill

No. 100; and we've had Bill No. 148. Unions from across the province have been here. Normally you don't see the NSTU or their members here in the hundreds and hundreds protesting. I have to say, over the last couple of years, we're starting to see them more and more. But in the previous 10 years that I've been in this Legislature, compared to the last three, it has been pretty rare to go out when there's a protest and have teachers there chanting their chants and trying to bring awareness around whatever the cause is at that moment.

That should be an alarm bell going off for the government right now. We have a group of men and women who normally spend their time in the classroom teaching, volunteering for a sports team, doing extra work, giving help after school, working on curriculum, working on grading assignments or inputting data in the programs that are there. Normally that's what they're doing, and they're not super-active on the labour front. Well, listen, I said this the other night - I was very impressed with the sheer approach and the sheer volume of people that were around this Legislature - pretty impressive. I think everybody by now has probably seen the photo that was taken from the Toronto-Dominion building across the way with the three streets just full, all lanes right around this Legislature. That doesn't happen too often.

That should be something that would be concerning, I would hope, of the government on - oh, wait a minute, maybe we don't have this, maybe we did miss the mark with more than just a few. I know the Premier mentioned in Question Period a number of times now over the last week that maybe the government missed the mark with some of the teachers. Well, I would agree with that, but I think it's with more than some of the teachers, it's with a lot of teachers - I've heard from them.

I said this the other night, I've been very fortunate being the MLA in my community and being involved with our kids in the school and in their sports, that out of the 13 and a half, almost 14 years, the teachers knew what my kids' father did for a living. They knew I was in government. They knew I was an MLA - an elected official - but they never talked politics with me. They knew I was there to watch my son or daughter play the sport or raise the money and work the canteen at a tournament, and they never spoke to me about politics until about 15 or 16 months ago, when I think the relationship between the government and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the teachers kind of started to go south, and a couple of teachers asked if they could talk to me while I was watching a basketball game. I didn't mind at all, because as I said, for 13 years they never really spoke to me. They never brought up political stuff; they knew I was there because I was a dad and I wasn't there because I was the MLA.

Don't get me wrong - I go into the schools, I go to the graduations. I'm invited because I'm the MLA. I do that, but I have to say they've been very respectful. I think that shows the level of respect I think the teachers have with this process that we go through. They're very respectful with that many people out there.

I knew I couldn't get my car out on Friday even though I was in the Opposition. There were just so many of them the police wouldn't even let us in Opposition leave on Friday with our vehicle. They were very respectful in their approach. I've seen different protests over the years and the way they've been doing it is very professional and they're very dedicated in what they do. I know some of them were here until 2:00 in the morning and they told me that they were coming back tomorrow.

They approached me in the gym, really concerned with what was going on and concerned enough that they were starting to be engaged in the political process. They started to organize. They started to respond and try to get the message out because, of course, they were fighting with the government and the message that the government wanted out, and of course you have other levels trying to get their message out with the executive of the Teachers Union. So these teachers wanted to make sure that I knew what they were feeling and what they were talking about. They admitted that in the lunch room, the teachers lounge, all they were talking about was how discouraging this process was and how angry they were getting at the current government - the Liberal Government.

I know there has been a lot of back and forth around when we were in government and then what's going on now. I have to say, even when I was in government, when I was a minister - I wasn't the Minister of Education, I was the Minister of Health and Wellness, and the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage - I was never approached by the teachers saying how angry they were with me or my government.

Now I know that some used their displeasure at the ballot box. My last election, my fourth election, wasn't my easiest election. Normally as you go along they get easier and easier. It was a challenge but I worked hard, knocking on doors and talking to people and standing up for our record, as government. I had to do that. The Liberal members across the way are going to have to do that in the next election, and I can tell them that it's not going to be easy.

I have a new respect for elections, I have new respect for the power of people's votes in ensuring that governments are doing the right thing. My fourth election was my toughest one, my hardest fight. I've learned from that and I've worked hard over the last three and a half years, hopefully to continue to gain their support or get it back for some who may have moved their vote.

With all that, I understand the decision that government has to make, but I also understand that they need to stand behind it and it's okay to admit that they've taken the wrong path. I've given how many examples a few minutes ago around the government's approach to things. No more negotiation after the second vote, but yet a month later they are back at the table to ask for a conciliator to bring them together.

The Seniors' Pharmacare, they were going to raise the rates for people and go forward with the rollout, but decided to pull back on it. The tobacco bill, government was

supposed to move forward with it; they pulled back on it and it came back in another session to change things and move forward with it. I think I could go on and on with a couple of other examples that kind of lost me right now - but that's probably because it's 4:47 a.m.

There is an ability for the government to do the right thing right now. I think it is really at the essence of this motion, this hoist, is to have that cooling-off period, to revisit it. Is this the path that the government wants to take to go forward in? Is having teachers and parents and students who support those teachers, so angry that there's this new - and I don't even know the correct name for it, it just happened over the week, it's something about crawling over glass . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Broken glass.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Broken glass. I mean, that's serious, Mr. Speaker, there are people who are that upset that they've created a new movement. (Interruptions)

There's a new movement, I mean that should be another alarm bell going off with the government. So, over the weekend they decided they would accept an amendment and move forward with that. So something changed in the government, in the Party. I mean a new movement being created that's totally against them should be cause for them to hit the pause button and say let's revisit this.

We all know that in the last federal election there was a movement, there was a new cause and that was Anyone But Harper - and look what happened there, Mr. Speaker. He is no longer the Prime Minister of this country. I'm not a fan of the new Prime Minister, but it shows then there's a cause out there that when people are upset, when people mobilize, when people engage, they can make a difference.

I know voter turnout is low at times and people kind of have an attitude that they can't make a difference and it doesn't matter. It does matter, every vote matters.

I remember Maureen MacDonald telling me - and I never forgot this - she was talking to some younger people and it was around election and why you should vote. She said - and it made sense to me - that it's the only time when someone who lives on Robie Street or who lives on Almon Street or lives in Yarmouth, or lives in Cape Breton or in Sackville, have the same power - during an election, at the ballot box.

It doesn't matter if you make a million dollars, a year, or if you're on income assistance, your power at the ballot box is the same. You have one vote; they have one vote. It's a powerful thing and it can make a difference, and that's what I'm hearing over this, especially the last week, is that there is a new group of people who are engaged, who realize that they do have some power, and I think they do. I mean, these men and women who teach our young people engage with them throughout their lives and they can help I

think - well, they do help as they mature. They engage not only with those students, with the parents, with the community - you know being a teacher is highly regarded; it's a respectful profession and they can have a lot of influence when it comes to elections.

The one interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is when the government moved the amendment there a little while ago - and I know some members said well, the bill's terrible, there's no sense of even trying to improve it. But there is, I think, an ability to try to improve it, to improve the legislation. I know on Friday, I think it was, the president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union was asked in the scrum when this legislation passes, which it'll pass, probably within the next 24 hours, maybe longer if we can get everybody up speaking and ...

AN HON. MEMBER: Thirty-six hours.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Thirty-six hours - that if it was passed would they participate in the council, and the president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union said of course. I mean, they're not going to just walk away from something that was in the legislation even though it was imposed on them, they would participate in it.

That's why I think it was important for us as a caucus to continue to push for an amendment to at least hopefully improve that situation of the council, and it's something we will be monitoring very closely in the coming months. I do think often that the glass is half full and not half empty - because you're going to live a miserable life if you can't have optimism, and hopefully things will get better. You have to be positive. You can't continue to look at the negative side of things. So, when I heard them say that, I knew we did the right thing by proposing the amendment even though - and I think the president of the union said we don't support the bill - I don't support the bill, but I think it might be a little better than it was a week ago.

The interesting thing about Friday and the strike - 122 years, first strike, and on the last day of Teacher Appreciation Week. How ironic. The start of the week we saw Bill No. 75 being introduced in the Legislature. So, the Premier had indicated today or this morning, that there was a \$3.4 million savings I think. I don't know, I guess you could call it a savings but it is because of Friday's strike. So not paying the teachers, there's \$3.4 million that the province will save - and I hope, I really hope, that goes right back into the classroom - and that's one thing heard. I know through the council and what's going to be created, well there'll be recommendations and now at least there'll be an ability to go to an arbitrator if they can't agree on it.

But what we heard in Law Amendments was that there were steps the government could take immediately to fix some of the pressures that teachers feel in the classroom - immediately. They've said this over and over again, because there have been studies, there have been white papers, there have been consultations for a lot of years now on how to do that, how to improve the situation. I think that \$3.4 million would go a long way to

improving some of the issues that were raised in Law Amendments and the issues that have been raised by those who couldn't make it to Law Amendments. I hope that the government will take today and tomorrow to think about that, and I hope the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development commit to making sure that that money goes right back into the classroom, not toward balancing the budget next month.

I can guarantee that both Opposition Parties are going to keep asking the Premier, "Where did that money go?" In the overall Department of Education and Early Childhood Development budget it might not be that big, but \$3.4 million could do a lot to address one of the issues that teachers brought up. So we're going to hold the government to account for that.

I know that there are other people who want to speak on this hoist, on this motion, but I do believe that this is a period in time that the government could hit Pause, could step back, could have a cooling-off period and figure out if this is the right way and if this is the road they want to go down.

If it is, there's not much we can do, Mr. Speaker. That will be on the Liberal MLAs and the Liberal Government to justify the next time they knock on a door and ask someone for their vote.

I know I'll have another opportunity later - in a few hours - to get up, so with that, I look forward to the comments of my colleagues.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. JAMIE BAILLIE: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and speak for a few moments about the motion as amended.

I think I'll start off by just talking for a moment about the amending motion itself, which is basically to amend to say that this bill will not be read for a third time, but will instead be read for a third time six months hence. In the words of the Legislature, that is a "hoist." You hoist the bill out of the present and you move it forward six months into the future.

Although in the current day it is often used as a parliamentary procedure to delay passage of a bill, the hoist actually makes a lot of sense in this case - that this bill actually be set aside for six months so that some good things can happen - maybe to avoid the need to pass it altogether, or maybe to just get the ball rolling again before it's considered six months from now.

Mr. Speaker, my point is that this hoist is a good thing that should happen at this time, not just a parliamentary procedure used by the Opposition to delay passage of a bill - a bad bill - in third reading.

I'm going to give you kind of a weird example: I remember that when the Liberal Party was over here in Opposition, the government of the day - an NDP Government - brought forward a bill that the Liberals moved to hoist. That was the Fair Drug Pricing Act, an NDP Government Act.

I know that might sound like an odd comparison - Bill No. 75, to force a contract on teachers, compared to the Fair Drug Pricing Act of 2012. However, here is the similarity: the NDP brought in a bill to claw down the price of generic drugs, which would cause great hardship to many of the pharmacies of the day - particularly the smaller independent ones that relied almost exclusively on things like dispensing fees and other pharmacy-related fees for their income - on the promise that in the future, they would form a committee with the Pharmacy Association to expand the scope of practice of pharmacies and put in place new fees for pharmacists to earn on new procedures that would make up the difference.

The problem was that the government legislated all the pain in the bill and then created a committee that promised that things would get better in the future, and asked pharmacists to accept that as a complete package. Well, I suspect you can now see the similarity here. The Liberals, in Opposition - and we as PCs were in Opposition at the time and agreed with our fellow Opposition Party on this - felt it was unfair, legislating the hard medicine - pardon the pun, since we're talking about pharmacies - and then asking pharmacies to trust you as a government, that you'll have a committee to make good things happen in the future, that that'll make it up.

Well, the logical way to deal with that was for the Opposition to move this six-month hoist where the bill would basically be delayed six months into the future so that pharmacists and the NDP Government could actually have their committee come up with the other services that would make up the difference. That made sense. The majority NDP Government of the day voted against the hoist and passed their bill.

That was in 2012, and here it is 2017 - the NDP Government is gone, the Liberal Government has been in for three and a half years, and you know what? Those pharmacists are still waiting for the second part - the committee work that would expand their scope of practice and come up with fee schedules for new things that they could do to earn income to make up for the clawed down generic drug prices.

That's exactly what Bill No. 75 is proposing to do: to impose a contract on teachers, the hard medicine, and then offer at some point in the future - a committee may come up with something that's positive.

Well, once bitten, twice shy. In the first case, it was our pharmacists and now it's our teachers. For pharmacists, I do want to say, I have met many pharmacists over the last number of years who saw their business income drop by half because of the drug price change. They are still waiting to hear what fee schedule will come forward to make it up. The irony of that is they actually believed the Liberals when they said they would bring in

the good part - the expanded fee schedule as a government and pointed to the hoist that they tried in Opposition as proof that they meant it.

Well, here we are in 2017, that has not happened - same Liberal Government. Now they're asking teachers to trust them on their committee. The problem is now their record is clear - whether it's pharmacists or family doctors or the film industry or the doctors of the province in their contract. It's obvious that they say one thing, make a lot of promises, and then do nothing or do the opposite.

Teachers are here seeing all that and asking, first of all, do away with Bill No. 75 altogether - and I'll get to that in a moment, but quite rightly saying, you know what? We don't trust the government. The spokespeople for teachers actually put out press releases that say - and I've tabled this already - we no longer trust Premier McNeil or the McNeil Government - now that's unprecedented.

When you realize that the relationship between the government and teachers is broken so badly that they're putting out press releases to make the point they don't trust the government anymore, then you can see why a promise of a future committee that might come up with something is not going to carry a lot of water because there's no trust. In fact, the government answer to this was just to keep upping the amount of money that they would throw at the committee. It was \$10 million in tentative agreement no. 2; when that got turned down, they doubled it to \$20 million in tentative agreement no. 3.

The problem is they're missing the mark - not just on this, but on many other things. But the issue was never the amount of money to fund the committee. The issue is - whether it's \$20 million, \$100 million, or \$200 million - teachers do not believe the government's going to actually make real classroom improvements. The money is not the point. In fact, who would run a province this way? Who would put the money up front and then fill in the details later of what it's actually going to be used for? That's no way to run anything.

Wouldn't it make more sense to actually put real classroom improvements on the table and then calculate the funding for them? That's how reasonable people would run a government. When this government doesn't do that - when they just assign a budget to a committee and say, you'll figure out something - no wonder people are cynical. Then they see it for what it is. It's just a bargaining chip, and the last thing that Nova Scotians want - particularly parents, students, and teachers - is to see classroom reform as a bargaining chip. There is either good policy for making classrooms better or bad policy. It's not a negotiated item, or it shouldn't be.

Like with the Fair Drug Pricing Act of 2012, which was hoisted or was attempted to be hoisted six months into the future so the good parts could be worked out and matched with the bad parts. So should this bill be hoisted six months into the future - and I want to be clear, it's still a bad bill - at least there's a chance that teachers and students and their parents will see the whole picture before any of us are asked to pass final judgment on this

bill. We have been clear. We think it's a bad bill. We think it will cost taxpayers millions. We see that it doesn't result in a single significant classroom improvement. That's why we're voting no.

But there has been lots of talk about whether every member on the government side has made up their mind about this bill. Apparently, there are some who are under some pressure to examine their conscience, to listen to their constituents, and to speak up. If that's the case, I hope it happens. They should be among those who would like to see the bill move forward six months until the bill becomes clear.

As I say, sometimes a hoist is a hoist for the purpose of extending debate on a given day. But we have these parliamentary procedures for a reason beyond that. The reason is to allow for the whole picture to emerge before a bill is considered for a third time. This is one of those times. I hope that all members take that into account when the time comes to vote first on the amending motion and then on the main motion itself.

When a relationship has been so impaired, I think it is a fair point to wonder whether sending the same government back to the negotiating table for a fourth time or the same Teachers Union, for example, for a fourth time or a fifth time under the current conditions is going to work. I think that's an open question. There have been some like the NDP who said, go back to the table. And there are others, I think reasonably, saying, this is not working. We need a new approach.

I think we do need a new approach. Maybe that new approach is to take a little time and actually work on classroom reform to try to build up some kind of working relationship with teachers again, to show some goodwill and some seriousness about enacting real reform not just committees to study reform, and to get the ball rolling. Hoisting the bill forward six months allows for that possibility. If, six months from now, actual real classroom reform is under way in some important areas like hard caps on class sizes, more EPAs, or new rules around the use of PowerSchool and TIENET, we might find ourselves as a province in a position where the negotiations can restart with a greater chance of success. Clearly, if we were to throw the two parties together today on a fourth round, I think it would be good to question why we expect this will end differently. In fact, you could argue it would be even harder because the level of distrust by teachers of this government has gone even further.

After all, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the vote results of teachers, we see that their rejection has gone up and up and up each of the three times they've been asked to vote on a contract, even though the government has thrown more and more money at each version of the contract. How can it be that teachers are rejecting the contracts by more even if the government is putting more money on the table? It seems pretty obvious that the government's offers are not about the right things.

For example, putting more money into a committee to study reform is not getting us anywhere. Maybe putting real reform on the table would get us somewhere. We need the six months to see if that will work. Maybe fiddling with the timing of the different raises in each year isn't interesting to teachers as much as getting at the job of hiring more EAs, of putting in place hard class caps, of getting serious about scaling back on the data input through PowerSchool and TIENET. None of those things has been actually put on the table by this government - not just put on the table for negotiating but put on the table for the purpose of making classrooms better. Maybe that's why teachers are yelling louder each time, no, no, you're not talking about the right stuff.

Mr. Speaker, let's give some time to allow those things to happen. Maybe this government is just not capable of dealing with these things in good faith. After all, they've had plenty of opportunities to get it right.

The other reason this hoist makes sense is it is clear - and this is not really a point of opinion or debate - that there is a massive lawsuit against the taxpayers of Nova Scotia coming down the track the minute the government uses its majority to pass Bill No. 75, a massive multi-million dollar lawsuit. We can debate whether we think the government will successfully defend its bill or not in court. What we know for certain, based on the overt statements of the Teachers Union, backed up by national groups like the Canadian Federation of Labour, is that they are going to be sued.

That lawsuit will work its way through the courts, up to the Supreme Court of Canada, and cost millions of dollars in legal fees. If the government loses, it will cost tens or hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money in payouts. We've argued this before, but it is reckless and dangerous and irresponsible to put the taxpayers of Nova Scotia at that kind of financial risk.

The irony of it is the government is arguing they can't afford to make these classroom reforms, they can't afford to negotiate fairly because they don't have the money. At the same time, they're risking literally tens of millions of dollars in legal fees and payouts. Mr. Speaker, we've got to stop that, we've got to protect the taxpayer from that kind of reckless risk. Hoisting the bill for six months gives us a chance to do that.

I know I've heard the Premier say oh no, the Teachers Union's own lawyer says their suit may not succeed. Well, that's not exactly what that lawyer said but setting that aside for a moment, Mr. Speaker, what has happened since then? Well, first of all, the government brought in Bill No. 75 which legislates a contract that's less than what was bargained for at the table in the third agreement. That's got to hurt the government's case, not help it, when they do get to court.

Then they subverted the democratic legislative process here by cutting off presenters - many of them teachers - at the Law Amendments Committee. That's got to

hurt the government's case since then, not help it. Now they're using their majority every step of the way to ram this bill through. That's going to hurt their case, not support it.

They even compelled Nova Scotians, whether it's the staff of this Chamber or the MLAs themselves or presenters at committee, to drive through blinding snowstorms to make their point. That's got to hurt the government's case, not help it, Mr. Speaker.

This is going to go to court, we are going to get sued - we, the taxpayers of Nova Scotia - and the chance that we're going to lose goes up and up with every action this government takes.

Mr. Speaker, for that reason we've got to get off this track. We've got to hoist this bill six months because we've got to save the taxpayers from that kind of incredible, reckless financial risk.

There has been some talk about the B.C. case. We can all have our opinion on it, of course, but I did hear the Minister of Justice say that she's confident that it's not the same thing. But it is the same thing. They were sued in British Columbia for legislating a collective agreement that breached the collective bargaining rights as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 2(d) of the Charter - freedom of association - exactly the suit that the teacher's union has stated they will bring against the Government of Nova Scotia here.

Mr. Speaker, you look at the decision and you can tell me whether you think it's the same or different - in that decision, on Page 3, one of the findings of fact by the British Columbia Supreme Court was that it was clear, and I've tabled this already, that the government had a strategy to put such pressure on the union as to provoke a strike. That's exactly what happened here on Friday - the Premier and his government caused a strike; they provoked a strike. Their actions provoked a strike - the first strike in our province's history by teachers. Thankfully, teachers called it for one day to make their point. They could have called it for longer, legally. I'm glad they didn't, but that was in their legal right to do so.

They called it for one day after being provoked by the Premier and this government - exactly like B.C. - and that action was noted by the Supreme Court of British Columbia in their decision. That court in B.C. went on to note that the government thought this would gain them the political support for imposing legislation. In other words, that's not a good reason under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

After making these findings in fact that the Minister of Justice referred to, the British Columbia Supreme Court ruled that the Liberal Government of B.C. had violated Section 2(d) of the Constitution and owed millions and millions of dollars in damages - \$300 million as it turned out - after the case had been appealed to the Supreme Court. It's

exactly the same situation; it's exactly the same risk that this reckless Premier is asking the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to take on.

I want to dwell on this for a moment, since we have time, because that case was appealed by the Liberal Government of B.C. to the British Columbia Court of Appeal, and I tabled their decision here a few days ago because it has very interesting parallels. You tell me whether you think this is the same or different from Nova Scotia. On Page 81 of the dissenting opinion of the Court of Appeal, the justices noted that pre-legislative consultation is irrelevant to the question of whether a Charter breach had occurred. It's irrelevant. Whether you went back to the table two times or three times, or 12 times, is irrelevant to whether you've breached the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or not. That is why we're going to get sued. That is why so many people are very worried that the government has put the taxpayers of Nova Scotia at reckless and needless risk for tens or hundreds of millions of dollars - because it's irrelevant.

Every time the Premier says that they've gone three times with two executives, we're all joking about it like it's a big drinking game. Well, it's not funny when you realize the truth is that his answer is irrelevant to whether people's Charter rights were breached or not, and it's irrelevant to whether the government will successfully defend a case or not. That was a decision by the British Columbia Court of Appeal upheld, by the way, by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Now you tell me whether you think we're safe after that. In fact, what the British Columbia Court of Appeal found - and I'll quote from Page 119 when they were enumerating their decision - ". . . provincial consultation was not in good faith no matter how extensive it was." That's a direct quote. Now you tell me whether that's the same or different. The fact you've done it numerous times does not make it effective or fair. How extensive it was is not the point - whether it was free and fair and equal is the point.

My friend and colleague, the MLA for Northside-Westmount, made the point that the first round was not fair or equal because the government just walked in, dropped its numbers on the table, and said that's it. The second round was less fair and equal because they had the spectre of Bill No. 148 hanging over their heads. The third round was less fair again because they had the actual Bill No. 148 and the spectre of legislation hanging over their heads. That's not fair and equal. That's not reasoned collective bargaining. You can do that 10 times over, and you can say till you're blue in the face how many times you've done it. It still is irrelevant to whether the Charter freedom, the freedom of association, and the right to collective bargaining derived from that freedom have been upheld or not.

We are talking about a lot of money in legal payouts here. A lot of people have been throwing around the B.C. case. But the ultimate arbiter is the Supreme Court of Canada. They looked at this. They looked at the facts in B.C. They looked at the decision of the Supreme Court of B.C. They looked at the dissenting opinion of the Court of Appeal of B.C. Then they walked into the chambers of the Supreme Court of Canada and, in 20

minutes, ruled from the bench that the right to collective bargaining had been violated in British Columbia, absolutely, no more appeals, and that the government of British Columbia was on the hook for \$300 million as a result.

How can anyone stand on the government side and say, we don't think that's going to happen here? Maybe they don't think it, but they're blind to what's going on in law in this country if they don't. That blindness, as reckless as it is, is going to cost the taxpayers of Nova Scotia a lot of money.

All of this could have been avoided by actually taking teachers at their word that their biggest issue is classroom conditions and actually dealing with them. The savings from the legal costs that are about to be incurred would more than cover real classroom improvements. If you ask 100 Nova Scotians where they would rather see their tax dollars go, into the classroom or into lawyer fees, 100 are going to say into the classroom. Maybe one will say to lawyers, but that's the lawyer that you've pulled in that 100. Outside of that, Mr. Speaker, it is so irresponsible to have condemned the taxpayers of Nova Scotia to go down this road. It's hard to believe.

You know what? That's not even the only series of cases in the country in the last five years that have dealt with this question. The fact is, there's an Ontario case - again, same situation. The Liberal Government of Ontario legislated a contract on a number of teachers unions in the Province of Ontario. Here's what they concluded as they ruled against the government and exposed the taxpayers of Ontario to millions of dollars in legal payouts, a direct quote, and I tabled this the other day. ". . . the ultimate question to be determined is whether the measures disrupt the balance between employees and employer . . ."

There it is. It's not how many times you went to the table. It's not how many executives you dealt with along the way. It's not even how many back-and-forths happened, or how many committees you promised to create. It's none of those things. It's whether you've passed legislation that disrupts the balance between the employee and the employer.

Buried in the print of Bill No. 75, outside of the contract itself, are many provisions that absolutely disrupt the balance between employee and employer, whether it's setting the terms of future work-to-rules, whether it's limits to strike action or whether it's the contract itself which imposes a settlement that was not reached at a negotiating table.

All of these things, or even having Bill No. 148 hanging in the air, prove that there is no balance between employee and employer in these negotiations because the employer is the government and because the employer/government has the majority and they can get their way and they wanted to make that clear when they walked in the room, or even before they walked in the room. That disrupts the balance. When that balance is disrupted, it is

the ultimate issue in determining whether the government has violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is therefore on the hook for a big, big payout.

Mr. Speaker, let's take six months and fix this before the taxpayers of Nova Scotia are on the hook, like the taxpayers in B.C. and Ontario are. Otherwise, the Premier said we're going to ram this bill through and we'll get back to normal. Well, we're not going back to normal; there's a whole new normal. I've heard a number of members of the government say, well we're going to do this because we want to end work-to-rule.

Mr. Speaker, the big problem is that the new normal does not contain the same amount of volunteer effort, enthusiasm, and energy by teachers as the old normal. It may not have the official title "work-to-rule" but for the rest of the life of this government, whatever that is, the new normal in our schools is a lot less than the old normal was. That's the risk of ramming the bill through when we have the option of at least hoisting it for six months until these things get worked out.

There's so much that could be done in this House through legislation that is not this. There is so much that could be done to make our classrooms better. Do you know what? On this side of the House, we've taken teachers at their word that their big issue is that they need help in the classroom. There is no doubt that there are some who are also looking at their pay and their benefits but overwhelmingly teachers are saying sure, anyone would like a raise but our big issue is that we need help in classrooms. We've actually taken them at their word on that.

The government is all over the board. If they sincerely think teachers are not out for classroom improvements - I shouldn't say they're all over the board, I take that back. The Premier has gone out of his way to demonize teachers, to make them look greedy, to embarrass them, to humiliate them, in public. He has gone out of his way in his statements in media interviews and in this House to do that. We've chosen to take them at their word that for the vast majority of teachers the big issue is classroom improvements. The Premier has taken the opposite tack and gone out of his way to try to make them look like it's all about money. Well, that's his choice. We've made our choice and the Premier has made his choice on behalf of the Liberal Government, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the Premier thought that's just negotiating. Well, it's pretty poor negotiating if it is, because what the Premier lost sight of so badly is that at some point you do have to settle a contract. When that's done, you need to be able to work with your employees - in this case it's the teachers of the province - to get things done in their classrooms. If you had gone out of your way to destroy that working relationship, how can you ever get back to working together to make things better in our schools? You can't. The Premier completely lost sight of that greater good, which is to maintain a working relationship with teachers so we could get stuff done in our classrooms.

Here we are with the Teachers Union putting out press releases saying that they no longer trust the Premier and actually warning the parents of the province that they shouldn't trust him anymore either. Well, now we're stuck because for the rest of the term of this government, we know there is no working relationship between the government and teachers and there will be no meaningful classroom improvements. That is our students who pay the price for those tactics, unfortunately.

Beyond that, when the Premier made his choice to go out of his way to burn his relationships with teachers, he also took us down the road of a legislated contract with all the legal risks that come with that. Somehow, we've got to put that working relationship back together, so why not set aside Bill No. 75 and use our time here to actually get the ball rolling on some meaningful classroom reforms?

We have come to this House not only to oppose Bill No. 75, although I hope we're making that point loud and clear that we do oppose Bill No. 75, but we've also brought in some positive new bills to get things rolling in our classrooms. There's been some debate over the last few days in this House about the no-fail policy. Nine thousand teachers were amazed to hear the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development say that the no-fail policy is a myth. We have heard from so many teachers since then who give example after example of where the no-fail policy exists. In fact, I will go so far as to say there's not a single teacher in Nova Scotia who has not felt the pressure to pass through students that they know in their heart should not be graded. It happens every year.

Mr. Speaker, you might say, well, that's anecdotal, although if it's a teacher telling you that, it's pretty direct evidence. So, we looked it up. We brought actual policy statements from school boards to the House, the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board being just one example where they actually say - and I've tabled this already - that it's extremely rare that a child would be held back because their policy is that children should learn in age-appropriate classes - meaning, they always stay with their age. Well, that's a no-fail policy.

When I presented that in the House to the Premier, he said no, I still think there's a no-fail policy - or there isn't a no-fail policy, excuse me, Mr. Speaker. At 5:30 a.m., got to get our descriptors right.

The school board policy goes on to say that in that very rare occurrence where a child is held back, it is the policy of the board that that will only happen once in the P-12 system. So if you're held back in Grade 1, you've got 11 free passes from then on. In fact, research shows that for most students, if they're going to be held back, it's usually because they're falling behind in reading or some early skill and it's likely to happen in the early grades. Now you've got a free pass all the way to Grade 12.

My point is not to re-debate the merits of no-fail or to hold students back and get them the help they need. We feel strongly that teachers should be given that ability to hold students back, and as a government, we swoop in with supports to help students next time around. But my point for tonight is that in light of the evidence that there are no-fail policies, the Leader of the government and the minister responsible for education continue to deny that they exist.

One member of the Opposition quoted from the minister's own Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website where they talk about the no-fail policy, and they still deny it exists. How can we ever move forward with educational reform in this province when we have a Premier and a Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development with their head in the sand about something as important as whether everyone gets passed through every year or not?

That's why we have a bill on the table right now. Everyone's talking about Bill No. 75 - let's take a look at Bill No. 76 on the order paper. That enables teachers to hold students back when they don't meet the curriculum. We could get the ball rolling on real reform right now. How much does that cost? Very little. The cost would be in the extra supports that we believe would be provided to students that do get held back because we do want them to advance, we want them to earn it, and we want them to advance over time.

Everyone in this House that has gone outside and talked to teachers that have been here or has listened to teachers in their own communities or gone to their own schools, hears overwhelmingly about attendance policy and discipline policy. On attendance, how students can miss classes regularly - week after week for the whole year and show up at the end and pass. There is no accountability for actually showing up in school anymore. We have to fix that because not only are those students being denied an education because they're not showing up for school, they're being denied some very important lessons of life, like being held accountable for the work that's assigned to you, like being held accountable for your own education, like taking responsibility for your own progress. That's gone.

We can actually fix that, and there's no cost to that. Overwhelmingly the teachers say, we want this. They want to hold students accountable for showing up. Let's give them that. That's one way to start the ball rolling again. That's one way to start to build up some trust in the system again, in the government again. How we have reached the point where we have a government that flat out refuses to deal with these things, other than to form another committee or on no-fail, to say it's a myth, but in case you think it's real - write a letter to the school boards to confirm that something that they believe doesn't exist truly doesn't exist. It's hard to take a lot of comfort in that.

On discipline, the same thing. We've had teachers that have talked about the physical risk they take in classes and that the other students take, the disruptive behaviour that interferes with the learning environment for all the students in class, that they feel

handcuffed to take action when a student hands in assignments months late; in fact, quite the opposite, they're forced to mark them. Let's fix that. There's no cost to actually putting in place a real attendance policy across the province and a real discipline policy across the province that teachers can enforce and send a strong message to teachers that the government will have their back when they do, because they will face parental pressure, student pressure when they begin, after all this time, to start to enforce these policies again.

They need to know that their Premier and their government have their back. They don't have that with this government and they have made it clear they don't trust this government to ever get there, but I can tell you, it's the only way forward to start to improve the learning environment in our classrooms and improve the professional working relationship between a government and its teachers. These are things we could be doing right now.

Hiring more EPAs. You say, well, where is the money going to come from? Well, scrap Bill No. 75 and take the \$20 million that the government found for their committee and hire more EPAs with it. There you go. Apparently the \$20 million is there - they found it. Let's actually use it for more EPAs. You can hire a lot of EPAs in a lot of classrooms and help a lot of students who are struggling, with \$20 million worth of EPAs - \$10 million the first year, \$10 million the second year. Let's just go do it.

I was going to calculate how many EPAs that would be. I didn't get a chance to do that. It's 5:40 a.m. so I'm not going to try that in my head, but that's a lot of help that we could put in our classrooms today - not at some future date through a committee, but today. Take some of it and put in place hard class caps on class sizes. You could cap a lot of classes with \$20 million or a portion of the \$20 million. We could do that today.

One of the benefits of that - and teachers have been very clear on this - there are a lot of split classes or a lot of combined classes across this province, one and two, two and three, three and four, and so on, and the minute you put hard caps on class sizes, where schools get an additional teacher when they exceed the cap, a lot of those splits go away - a lot of them go away; you actually solve two problems at once.

By the way, a lot of the PowerSchool problem is that the intensity of the data entry workload in PowerSchool doubles if you're teaching a split class. You can kill three birds with one stone by using that money that's there, they found it, they've allocated it for these things right off the top. Why don't we do that? We could do that right now. We're in favour of actually using that money to do these things right now.

Mr. Speaker, if you say well that might cost more than \$20 million, well we found \$3.5 million here on the floor of this Legislature in Question Period that came from the strike day that has fallen into the government's coffers, and there's the \$8.4 million that the government found when they offered the two extra days, PD days for teachers, in tentative agreement no. 3, which now has been taken back because it's not in the contract

in Bill No. 75. They obviously found the \$8.4 million for those two PD days to offer it, even though teachers weren't asking for it. The government put it on the table, so why not take that and use it for real, hard class caps and for more EPAs? You could do a lot of good in our classrooms this year with that kind of money, but that's not going to happen if Bill No. 75 passes because Bill No. 75 takes that money and sends it to a committee.

Mr. Speaker, if someone can show me where in the bill it says the committee will spend that money in this year on these things, then I would like to see that, but that's not what it says. So why have the committee when we know right now that we can do good things with that money, now, without recourse to a committee?

The government likes to talk about all the rounds of bargaining and all the time they spend on education - you'd think they'd have a few ideas about what we could do to improve our classrooms, so why not get on with it? Teachers have said enough committees, let's get on with it. Parents and students said enough committees, let's get on with it. We are saying enough committees, let's get on with it - and here's the money to do it.

It doesn't happen very often in this House that you actually have real ideas on the table to make things better and the money to do it already identified, but that is the case now, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't happen if Bill No. 75 passes, but it can happen if Bill No. 75 is either defeated or set aside, then we're on the way to real progress. And that's what we want to see: real progress.

I know it's not specifically listed in Bill No. 75, but I hope that somehow it gets addressed, and I will bring it up one more time, and that is the need for more adolescent mental health supports in our schools. This is something we have been advocating for long before the current impasse. It's something positive that we can do. Teachers have raised it as the fastest-growing issue in their classrooms. It may well be the biggest health care crisis of our time: mental health. Over and over again, when we talk about mental health here on this side, we're asked, where would you start? It's a great question because you have to start somewhere.

In the broad spectrum of mental health issues, Mr. Speaker, where there's such great need for more mental health supports, you have to start somewhere. So we've said we'll start with our kids, we'll start with adolescent mental health supports. There are too many young, teenage boys and girls showing ever-increasing incidences of mental illness like depression and like anxiety. If it's identified early and treated, we can send them back on the road to success. But that can't happen unless we get going on these things.

The wonderful thing about our school system is, that's where our students go every day. I know that sounds blindingly obvious. But that's where the students of the province go every day, so if we want to actually deliver proper mental health supports to young Nova Scotians, we gather them in a school every day where we can do that. That's why this is also a school issue. That's why teachers are raising it, because that's where we have

our best shot of reaching young people who are beginning down the road of mental illness, and their families.

SchoolsPlus is a program that helps in this area in some of our schools. But it's stretched way too thin and doesn't reach enough schools. We should set it as a goal that we're going to get mental health supports in every school in the province.

Teachers, who are already telling all of us that they're overwhelmed by their duties, are still asking for more training in mental illness identification, in early identification and what to do about it. Let's give that to them. They're on the front lines in a lot of these cases.

We have an opportunity to provide students with mental health training and, first of all, destigmatize it so that they know if they are suffering from a mental illness - anxiety, depression, or otherwise - that's okay. It happens. It's an illness like any other. If you have thoughts in your head of self-harm or harming others, it's an illness, and you can be treated for that. If we teach them to watch for those things in themselves, to have the confidence to identify that this is where they're at in their lives, and then put in place the supports to get them the help they need in time, this is an awesome way to attack the mental illness crisis in this province.

Why aren't we talking about this stuff, Mr. Speaker? Why don't we have a Bill No. 77 or Bill No. 78 that deals with this, with the budget to go with it? That would be a much better use of our time than to push forward with Bill No. 75. In fact, why don't we take the legal money that we know is coming and dedicate it to mental health supports in our schools? That would be something positive that we could do. It's probably something we could all do together. What a statement that would make to all the people of Nova Scotia who are watching this place - I will say with some dismay about what they see - and show them that we can do good things.

I raise all these things because, as I mentioned earlier, we've taken the view that you should take teachers at their word when they say that by far their number one issue is supports in our schools. The Premier has taken the government down the exact opposite road. If the Premier is speaking for the government, and they really believe that, that it's all about money, wouldn't it make sense to deal with all of these non-money things and then have nothing left but the money? Then we'll see. Then we'll see who's right.

We've heard from countless teachers who say, if you can get going on these things, you can keep my raise. I just want to see these things happen. The Premier believes the opposite and has said so repeatedly. So let's get it down to that. I believe you would find a collective agreement reached relatively quickly when teachers see good-faith effort in these reform areas. Maybe the Premier doesn't. But we would find out if we actually got this done. As long as this churn continues with all of the reforms and all of the financial details of their contract mixed together, we'll never know.

That's a pretty poor strategy on the government's part. It has caused all this turmoil. It's why they've missed the mark, as the Premier says, time after time. It's why we're faced now with a bill that in our opinion is reckless and going to cost us more anyway in legal fees than we ever could have spent in the classrooms themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I support the hoist, that's why we believe that this bill should be set aside for the six months so that cooler heads can prevail and good things can happen, and then another run can be taken at a legal and negotiated contract instead of the imposed one and the unconstitutional one that Bill No. 75 entails. So, with those few words, I'll take my seat and allow for the debate on the hoist to continue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion to delay the passing of this bill for a six-month period. What comes to mind I think - I wasn't here for Law Amendments Committee but I did take an opportunity to review a lot of it over the weekend and saw the presentations, and while there are many, many issues that have been addressed and a lot of those issues I'll address on third reading because I expect that we're going to go to third reading, so I'm not going to dwell on them here. I'm going to try and stick to reasons why we should adjourn this for six months.

Clearly a theme that emerged is the fact that teachers feel they haven't been consulted and in the past, since this government came in, 2013 - I think I have the dates right on that, I'm not sure - there were three initiatives, two by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and one by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. We're familiar with the action plan.

I sat in on the Human Resources Committee and heard the deputy minister speak about that. I heard her speak about the literacy strategies, and I also sat in for discussion on the School to Success strategies, and with every one of those, I looked to see - they were big committees, I'm sure fairly expensive endeavours, quite extensive research, and a lot of expertise was brought in, I think, on all of those projects from what I could see when I read through them - but I always like to look to see who actually was involved, who was selected or asked or appointed to participate in these panels and, inevitably, the sad part of it was that there were very, very few teachers, very few front-line teachers on any of these.

When I hear the teachers talk about the fact that they are not being consulted, I felt that I could understand that because I think there was proof by just even looking at that. Whatever the hierarchy is within the teaching profession, it seems definitely to keep the teachers at the bottom, and that probably is why we're experiencing so many of the challenges that we are - and I'm not suggesting that they all started in 2013; they've been coming along for a long time.

The issue of consultation, the other side of that - or, no, not the other side but the nub of consultation is being listened to, and that's what the teachers want. I think if there is a single thing that you could say in all of this wide and varied chaotic state we find ourselves in is the absence of that, of not being listened to. And being listened to I think is a very difficult thing to achieve if a person doesn't know how to listen - and learning to listen is really a skill that you acquire. It's not easy; it's not easy to listen to people. How many times do you see yourself or you're in a situation where somebody comes up and starts a conversation with you or starts to provide you with an opinion, and immediately in your head, you're thinking, I don't agree with that. You want to interrupt, and you want to challenge. You don't necessarily want to wait it out and listen to what they are saying. I think we're all guilty of that. What I have understood, I think, and learned - and I'm not trying to suggest I've acquired the skill at all. I'm sure there are many who would say I have not at all.

I did try to apply it and hone the skill as a managing lawyer at Legal Aid. Many times we were under the gun like the teachers are, only I don't think to the same degree. It's this new thing, a new language. It's applying a corporate model on a not-for-profit entity. That's where all of this mess starts, but I'm not going to dwell on that. We were under pressure, and our mantra was we will do more with less. That was it. She's now the deputy minister, but she put that in there, and we had to toe the line on that.

What ends up happening when you're following that and there's no consideration being given to new resources is that your staff really, really feels the pressure. In my experience, people would come in to talk to me about that. I saw people who were pretty well on the brink of some serious mental health issues directly related to their work and their workload. I understood it. I did the same work, so I was certainly able to understand it. They would quite often come in to see me, and we would have very long conversations.

I can remember initially really wishing I didn't have to do that. I had my own work to do. I had clients waiting. I had a phone ringing. I had all sorts of other administrative duties to attend to. I had to get myself over that little hurdle of saying, this is so annoying. I don't want to do this right now. But once you flip your mind through that and you settle in and you say, this is what I need to do for the next hour or whatever length of time it takes, it's not that hard. You do end up listening and listening and listening. You don't have to say a lot.

At the conclusion of many of the times when people came to me, I didn't have a solution. I just didn't have an answer. I could offer them something, and it was pretty limited. If you're carrying 140 files, I would say, bring me a couple of your real dog files, the ones that are very time-consuming or where you're having difficulties with your solicitor-client relationship. Bring those to me, and I'll see if I can arrange for other counsel to look after those files. I would be insistent on that. I would say, bring me five. I want five of your files, and I would like you to have them in to me as soon as possible. I think you just need a break. My concern selfishly, though, was that by doing this, I could avoid them

going out on sick leave, which would leave us short-staffed, for six months or sometimes up to a year.

I guess what always amazed and really humbled me was the fact that I never got those five files. I may have told this story before. I don't know exactly what happened. We never really talked about it. They might bring in one or maybe two. I think it was because of their own professional pride. They had pride in their work, and they wanted to keep up. They didn't want to burden anyone else. But at the same time, I also felt that they felt they'd been listened to, that somebody had heard them, and somebody had validated their feelings. That's just a tiny, little micro thing, and I guess it's just part of managing that took me far too long to figure out actually.

I'm always attracted to that idea that to listen to somebody is a very treasured and important and valuable thing. Through this process - I would get those emails, and I didn't care if they were constituents or not because I was just maybe curious. I would ask them or write them back, or if I was meeting with them I would say, why is it that there is such a disconnect? Why is there this hierarchy where you seem to be way down here and you've got the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development up here? In between, you have your superintendents and principals and all of that. I said, why is this the way it is? Why can't we get this sorted out?

I asked them, would there be value if the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development toured the province and met with you, whether you took a PD day or whatever it was, and the minister could come in and present her case to you and you could present your case to her? If there was a real discussion and real listening going on, do you think that that would work? Do you think that that could fix what's happening here because sometimes we can get - there's this whole thing with the public school system, with all the emails that came in. I was completely ignorant - you know, once your kids are out of the school system, let's face it, we don't pay very much attention to it - and, boy, did they open up my eyes to so many of the things and the problems. It just seemed to go on and on and on, and you heard something different from everybody. It was just so big that it was a little bit overwhelming to try to think about how you can fix it.

Sometimes I think it's great to get resources or to add extra resources, extra resources will always help a situation, but it doesn't entirely help the situation if there are other problems.

Throughout this process I felt - and I was particularly happy to be able to speak to this motion because I would really encourage the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to maybe open up and try that approach with the teachers. In saying that, I would say that delaying the passing of this bill for six months would be a huge leap of faith for everyone, for all sides in this, if you just went to them and said, okay, we need to listen to you.

I hear the Premier saying he's listening, I hear the minister saying that they're listening. But it's like, are you serious? Because I'm here on Friday and there's protesters - I've never seen so many - so many teachers out there. If you're listening, oh my God, they don't get it; they're not figuring out that you're listening, so there's something wrong. There's clearly a communication strategy that has totally failed.

I'd like to be like my friend from Sackville for whom the glass is half-full and not empty, although sometimes during this I really didn't share that optimism. I think it's important that we maintain that, that there be some hope here.

I guess the other aspect of this, and it has been referred to before, and again in keeping with the theme of being listened to, is what happened at Law Amendments Committee. I feel very grateful and privileged that we still have the Law Amendments Committee, and I'm fearful that one day we won't because I know that in other jurisdictions and provinces they don't.

In my short time here, I enjoy the Law Amendments Committee, I really love sitting at the Law Amendments Committee and hearing people come forward, because it's the only vehicle that people have in this legislative process when we're putting bills - and as my friend alluded to - important stuff happens here. That's the only opportunity people have to come in here for the five minutes and then five minutes for questions - 10 minutes they get the floor - and it's so important. It's at the heart of our democratic institutions. I know it probably sounds trite to say that, but it's so true. We cannot underestimate the value of that.

You think, we're in a political world and we have lots of staff who advise us and tell us how to do the politically right thing or what's the best move, what's the best strategy to take on any given issue - I'm assuming that the government has lots of people around like that. I just can't understand why every single person who signed up did not get to speak. I think that's such a travesty and I think it sends such a bad message - it says we don't want to listen to you. And if that's not saying we're not interested in hearing from you, I don't know what else is.

I think of the kids, in particular, I think of two high school kids who organized in Dartmouth High and Prince Andrew - and I'll talk about them later in the day - whether it was December 5th or Friday, whatever, there were a lot of kids around, students, and they were becoming engaged. We can't ask for more than that, that they are getting engaged. They were organizing rallies; they spoke to the media. They contacted all of us, the students did, they were being very politically active to show their support for the teachers. Then I think, oh my God, what did they think when they heard that people couldn't speak at Law Amendments Committee? That's not us setting a good example at all; we can do better - we can do better.

I am not being critical of one Party or another because I'm sure we've all been guilty of it, but this situation with teachers is kind of special because they are special in our communities. The teachers in our communities, and we've heard them say this before, have our kids five hours a day. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, when you went to parent-teacher interviews, when you got that unnerving feeling that the teachers know stuff about your kid that you don't know. I mean that happens to all of us. You think that you know everything about your child, but you don't and the teachers do, because the teachers invest themselves. It's a very interesting job, and I think the profession is unique in the sense that teachers not only invest intellectually to teach but they invest emotionally in the classroom.

If there is a profession, and traditionally for years - this is certainly not a problem that happened as I said in 2013 - I feel that it's very sad that this group has been kept at the bottom of the hierarchy and they haven't been paid attention to, they haven't been listened to. So, what I'm suggesting is that we need to adjourn this, stop it right now, and come up with a really - I guess it would be incumbent on the government to come up with a strategy.

My friend earlier referred to the process that happened with the accessibility legislation. That, you know, there's an example of something working - well, it started off very badly, people had to scramble to get to the Law Amendments Committee, it was on short notice. Many people in the disability community and people who had been involved in the consultative process didn't know what the final bill looked like. That wasn't fair game; and, boy, they let people know it, and they were successful - well at least in convincing the government to have another go at this. So, now, we are going to have two more days of Law Amendments Committee. In the interim, there was a government committee that toured the province doing an information session on the legislation.

I attended one of the sessions, and it was amazing. It was really good; they were so good at their job - they should be commended, that committee, for sure for the work that they did. It was information; they were very clear - we're not hearing from you, this is just for us to explain what this bill is about and we are going to explain the Law Amendments Committee, and we are going to explain that we're going to give you lots of time to get there, you'll have a month's notice. It was all so well done - class act I'd say. And I'm looking forward to what will happen, but I can tell you that the community who's directly affected by the Statute felt very gratified. I could sense that; I could sense that all the hostility that had been there at the earlier Law Amendments Committee was gone, and it was because they were being paid attention to.

But that Accessibility Bill is completely, is so different from the particular Statute we're dealing with, Bill No. 75. That's imposing a contract on people. It's taking away - there's no way around it - it just has removed their right to collective bargaining.

This is an imposition; it's being forced on the people who are going to be - well the other party don't want it; they don't want anything to do with Bill No. 75. But it's going to be put on them anyway. So, why when you have an even more, I guess, volatile situation

than the accessibility legislation are you not giving that the same respect and due that it should have? I encourage the government to do what they did before. You did it. The government did a wonderful job, and I want to compliment them on that, but do it again because this one is even more urgent I would say, and it's certainly one that is going to impact - it's our kids and it's the future of Nova Scotia, and we know that, we know that.

I'm concerned that if this Act goes into play, gets passed, with the volatility that currently exists - and other people have spoken to this - I don't want to be an alarmist, but I feel that it will lead to pandemonium. I believe that it's going to diminish our public education system. I would hate to see us in this province lose our children to the private education system. I think that might happen.

One of the things with my kids when we were in Sydney, in their early years of education, was that there were no private schools there, so you weren't competing with that. You just had what I felt was an excellent standard of education there. I think here in metro, it's a little bit different. We have the private schools. I think we'll see more and more people going in that direction, and I disagree with that. When that happens, then the resources will diminish more and more in the public system. For those reasons, I ask that, but mostly to try to pave the way.

In the bill, we're setting up a commission, and we're setting up a council. The structure of both requires consultation. Well, we go back to the action plan, the Literacy Strategy, and the School to Success strategy, which are still ongoing. I'm sure the teachers have noticed what I noticed, that they weren't major players - far from major players - in developing these strategies and plans.

They probably don't have a lot of faith that either the commission or the council is going to serve their needs. I think that's evident by the fact that they're not supporting this. Somewhere along the way, hopefully, if this was put off for six months, maybe we could go some distance to genuine listening, to repairing the broken relationships, to building some trust. There is no trust, I don't think - no, I know there isn't.

All members here have probably received the same emails. They're talking about adaptations, IPPs, PowerSchool, TIENET, suspension policies, absentee policies, classrooms too big, schools in disrepair, or the whole issue of inclusive education. Everything is there. It's like there's this big gush after years and years of silence, really, from the profession.

I found this article. It's so well written. I really liked it. It's written by Leo McKay, a high school teacher. I'm going to reference just a little bit of it, not too much. He says, "I have been a public school teacher in the province of Nova Scotia for twenty-three years. So far, I have barely commented on the Nova Scotia Teachers Union's dispute with the McNeil government. I have not felt particularly militant in this dispute, not because I do

not think there are major problems facing classroom teachers, but because so many of these problems have gone on for so long that I've just gotten used to holding my tongue."

He goes on to say, "The McNeil Liberals did not invent the current problems . . ."

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member not to use the surname of members of the House even when quoting from documents. Please refer to the Premier as "the Premier."

The honourable member for Dartmouth South has the floor.

MS. MANCINI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for my error in that.

What he referred to - he did indicate that the current government did not create these problems, and he talked about how one regime inherits from the one that came before it. But what he says is, "But their bull-headed approach to their relationship with the NSTU has caused the worst rupture in labour relations in the memory of anyone currently teaching."

I have read the entirety of his article and found him very succinct and very concise, and I think I'll be referring to him a little bit later, too, sometime in the day. I think we could put a fair bit of weight in his words.

I think there is a breakdown. I think it's bad. I don't think it all started in 2013, but it has erupted. It has erupted on this government's watch, and it has been antagonized by the actions of the government. I think it's been antagonized by a government that has decided that it's going a certain way - and I'll speak more about that later on today - and it seems to me that it's such a narrow, focused way that is not necessarily realistic, and I think that there is a lot of frustration felt by the teachers. They may talk and talk, but I don't think this government is really listening to them.

I don't really have much more to say . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. If I could ask the honourable member to table that document? I know you want to refer to it later, but I'm sure we could get a copy made.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South has the floor.

MS. MANCINI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, if the bill passes, what good is it going to do? Is it going to help the teachers teach? Is it going to help the students learn? How will it ensure that the parents and the taxpayers can feel some sense of hope that their children are getting a quality education?

I don't think there is any benefit to be gained right now, at this time, in passing this legislation. I believe the avenue to go is to reopen it to the Law Amendments Committee, allow those other 300 people to speak, and listen to them. It will go a long way. Follow the model that occurred under the Accessibility Bill. I honestly believe, Mr. Speaker - and I'll conclude my comments - the only thing I can think of is that this piece of legislation, at this time, is simply pouring kerosene on a fire. I don't think good things are going to happen as a result.

I encourage this government to support this motion. Those are my comments. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: "You have told me about your hopes and dreams for a Nova Scotia where your children and grandchildren can prosper. I share that dream."

Those are the words of the Premier, Mr. Speaker, talking about understanding the hopes and dreams people have for a Nova Scotia where their children can prosper. He said he shares that dream, and I'm sure he does. I'm sure that's a dream that we all share. But what we've heard for months, for some of us, and for years, for some of us, but if nothing else, than for days, for the rest of us, from teachers and people working in the school system and parents and students themselves, is that our education system is not producing students who can prosper, who can fulfill their hopes and dreams. And that's the real issue, because many of us have hopes and dreams for various things - for ourselves, for our friends, for our families, for this Legislature.

To really understand - and the Premier has said, you've told me your hopes and dreams - it implies a certain degree of listening. I often wonder what's the disconnect between when the Premier was hearing those hopes and dreams and what we see happen in this Legislature. In this Legislature, particularly over the last couple of days, but certainly for a while, we have had people who are trying to communicate to this House. They just want to be heard, they want to feel like they've been heard, and we should take the time to listen to them - and that hasn't happened this week where there's been a bit of a rush to get this piece of legislation through.

We know how it started. It started for me with a notice on Saturday that there was an emergency session of the Legislature to happen on that Monday and we all know what happened on that Monday, it was a massive snowstorm rocking the entire province, shutting down pretty much the entire downtown Halifax, yet this emergency session was still on track, it was still going ahead. It had to happen because we had a big emergency that had to be solved. Ultimately during the day it was postponed by a day and put to the next day, but not without a series of all-night sittings.

I've talked before about the number of all-night sittings that this Legislature has experienced over the years. Between 1993 and 2013, when this Premier was elected, the Legislature had one all-night session - it was in 2001 to deal with what was an actual emergency.

Under this government, in three short years we are now enjoying our fourth series of all-night sittings, our fourth session that included all-night sittings, our fourth emergency; in fact, we are here for our second emergency in, I think, just two months. We all remember the emergency that wasn't, back in early December when we had a real, real extreme crisis on our hands because our students wouldn't be safe with their teachers on Monday - I think that was December 5th - and all the legislators from across the province were summoned to Province House to deal with that emergency. That emergency disappeared in the span of a couple of hours - before one word was said in this Legislature.

So, we have to ask ourselves: what is really happening here? It's not even a rhetorical question, I really don't understand the amount of overnight sittings we have here. I'm going to call it an "abusive process," that is how I would refer to it because no good can come of standing in this Legislature in the middle of the night trying to debate a piece of legislation. It's not the time for it; it's not necessary in the absence of an actual emergency. Yet here we are again. I call them "manufactured crises," this government is very good at manufacturing crises. It's a real sign of a lack of leadership, really, is what it is when you have these many crises, jumping from this stone to that stone and sitting all night, it's a real shame.

What happens when you're jumping from crises to crises and you have all these emergencies is you just don't have time to deal with ordinary Nova Scotians, and we saw that in spades this week with the Law Amendments Committee. There's just absolutely no time for this government to listen to ordinary Nova Scotians that want to exercise their right to enjoy the privilege of coming to Province House and speaking at the Law Amendments Committee.

This government was not interested, put a little sham of one on and listened to a few presenters, and all the rest of the people who did what they were asked - their government said, if you want to present to the Law Amendments Committee take these steps, call this number, send an email, do whatever it takes to get your name on the list to present at the Law Amendments Committee, and many, many Nova Scotians did that; they did exactly what they were asked. Yet, they still weren't afforded the privilege of presenting to the Law Amendments Committee, and that's a complete shame.

It was a surprise to me that that happened because I remember what happened at the Law Amendments Committee in December 2015, on Bill No. 148, and I thought, they're going to learn from that. I was optimistic. I said, they're going to learn a lesson right there and we're going to see some humility now. Flash forward to today and we're back with a comparable situation that in many ways is worse.

Back in 2015, many members of this Legislature will remember Mr. Robert Tupper. Mr. Robert Tupper was the hearing-impaired individual who wanted to present to the Law Amendments Committee. I remember the despicable way in which he was treated by the chairman of that committee, the MLA for Cumberland North, who turned Mr. Tupper away twice, including one time when an interpreter showed up to help Mr. Tupper. He said, you're too late, you're too late. I think at the time they said 20 minutes too late, and he never . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. The word "despicable" was ruled on December 15, 2011, as unparliamentary language, so if you could rephrase that sentence, I would appreciate it.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I retract the word "despicable."

The way I would characterize what happened to Mr. Tupper is that he was treated in a very mean-spirited way by the chairman of the Law Amendments Committee on that day. I remember thinking to myself, there's a lesson to be learned there and the committee will do better and this government will do better. Then, along comes the Law Amendments Committee on Bill No. 75, and what amount of disappointment this Law Amendments Committee caused so many Nova Scotians. I've got an unbelievable amount of emails, as the other members in the Chamber would have, from people who said, I didn't get a chance to present to the Law Amendments Committee, but this is what I wanted to say.

I saw a video on social media that somebody shared and said, my niece worked so hard on this presentation; she was so nervous/excited to go to Province House and present before the committee. It is a nerve-racking committee for a Nova Scotian to come to this building and present before the very formal Law Amendments Committee. You can imagine especially the emotion in the presentations this time. You can imagine what that kind of meant to people. So, to just get it shut down or not even get a call, they didn't get a spot, it was a real shame and it sent a message to the people that the government's not listening. I don't think that's a message that should ever be sent from this Chamber, but that's the message that's being sent.

It was interesting in Question Period the last couple of days, watching the Government House Leader and the Premier - how unapologetic they were about that. Not once did I hear anyone from that side say, I do feel bad for those teachers who wanted to present, I do feel bad about that. Not once.

I heard a few stories about it's the Opposition's fault or it's the weather's fault, it's everybody's fault, but not once did I hear any little bit of humility. I didn't hear any kind of "graciousness," to use a word that my colleague used earlier. That comes right from the top, that comes right from the Premier. The Premier was completely unapologetic. He just

said that's the Opposition's fault that people didn't get to speak. It's not the Opposition's fault that people didn't get to speak. It's the fault of a government that is trying to rush a piece of legislation through so fast that they don't have time to listen to ordinary Nova Scotians.

That's not the way the Law Amendments Committee is supposed to work, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that at some point in the future we see some different actions. We haven't seen them yet but I'm hopeful, I'm optimistic because this is bigger than the people in this Chamber today, because we will all change in time. If we are not going to allow the Law Amendments Committee to operate the way it's intended to work and the way that it has worked for decades and generations, then we are changing a system that has great value and importance to the people and I don't think we should do that lightly.

It occurred to me that as much as the Premier says we have to get back to normal - and we've had a discussion, who wants to get back to normal? Normal is not great, but he says we want to get back to normal. I think with the animosity that has been created right now, the new normal is not going to be fantastic and, as members in this House, we better be prepared to hear from those people whom the government maybe didn't want to hear from over the last few days, because we are going to hear from parents and we are going to hear from teachers and we are going to hear from students about the issues in the system.

When we talk about the way the Law Amendments Committee works and the things that are supposed to be happening in this House, especially on an issue like education - I'm pretty sure that for all of us in this Chamber education is one of the main things that speaks to why we do this, why we enter politics. We do it because we want to make things better and we want to make things better for children in many cases, and it speaks to the very heart of why many of us are here.

This is a big issue and I think that's why we are seeing the amount of outpouring of stories and responses and protests and stuff like that because it doesn't only speak to the core of us, it speaks to the core of most Nova Scotians, and it's bigger than the people in this Chamber today.

Now this bill will pass, that's a foregone conclusion. We heard that even as the Law Amendments Committee was being shut down, even as this bill was in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, it was made pretty clear by the Premier that this bill would pass. His caucus was in line and it would pass, regardless of what was said on Friday, regardless of what was will be said today. The bill will pass and the shame of it is, the passage of this bill doesn't do anything to improve education in this province.

We've talked a lot about teachers' perspectives, and I do want to do that a little later this morning as well, but I do want to talk about the student perspective. I've heard from many young people mostly in high school. Kenzi Donnelly is obviously a person who is well-known to this House, a wonderful young lady who's very active in her school, and

which has caused her to get active in politics. She's at Prince Andrew High School, Mr. Speaker, and she talked about some of the things from a student perspective that I want to walk through. One of those things she talked about is the class sizes. She says:

We're not getting the best education possible when we're stuck in classes with well over 30 other students and almost every class you attend or walk by has over 30 students, and much of the time there are not even enough desks for everyone.

This was kind of a new one on me over the last couple of months - not enough desks for the students in classrooms. That's pretty shocking. She continues:

Two of three classes I was in last semester had nearly 40 students. This semester, a class I have in our computer lab has 35 students in it - and despite there not being enough desks and computers in the lab for every student, we all show up.

Now, just imagine being in a computer lab course and getting there, and there are not enough desks or computers. I, for one, didn't realize this was happening in our province in 2017. It's just another level of anxiety for people to deal with, probably trying to rush to the class to get a desk. It's not right; it's not right. And in her math class, she says, there are so many desks in the math class in such a small classroom that they can hardly walk around the classroom - they can hardly move around.

These are not ideal learning conditions, and it's impossible to receive one-on-one support during class time because of how many students the teachers need to work with. There are so many students for the teacher to work with, and we've heard this from the teachers' side, how many teachers are crying every day and just stressed out because they can't reach the students.

So that's not going to be fixed. We'll pass this bill today, but that's not going to be fixed by this bill. In fact, this bill pushes that issue out two more years. There are no intentions under this bill to think about class sizes. Not for the 2017-18 class year; no consideration of it then. Not for the 2018-19 year - no consideration of it then. It's right in the bill, Clause 12, that there's no change to the class size for three more years. This bill doesn't do anything to fix education.

Kenzi talked about the mental health training and services that need to be available in the schools. As a fellow student, she says she recognizes a massive, massive need for mental health resources. She says every single day she sees a student in the midst of a mental health crisis. Sometimes it's school-based, it could be an anxiety attack over a presentation or a mark, but other times it's a matter of some mental illness that they're struggling with.

Students are missing school, they're panicking in hallways or bathrooms, or coming to school with clear evidence that they've harmed themselves or done harm to somebody else every day. Every day the teachers are going out of their way to try and help these kids. So there is a massive need for mental health services in the school system. This bill is not addressing that. We have a big emergency we've been here for, but the emergency we're dealing with isn't getting to the root of the issues in the system.

Talking about the computer lab and the amount of students and the amount of computers - not enough. It's not lost on the students that we're trying to push technology to be incorporated into our schooling. But if you don't have the resources and the computers, everyone doesn't have the same advantage.

I was thinking about the coding initiative, which I think is a well-intentioned initiative. It's something I was pleased to see, to hear the top line in the news story - I thought that's pretty good, actually. In fact I wrote a letter to my local paper applauding that. Then when I started to hear from teachers and dig into it how poorly the execution on the rollout of that was: teachers didn't get trained, the department was pushing out these initiatives, but weren't giving the teachers any road map of how you get there. Then you get in the classroom and you don't have the technology. These things have to be more thought out. There needs to be a plan for these things.

The students are recognizing the behavioural problems and the attendance issues in the school around them - especially the high school students. They know the students who are not going to attend every day, they know the students that maybe there's some behavioural issues around there. That causes them stress when they're in a classroom and they're wondering what might happen today.

These can't be addressed by the teachers and the administrators because they just don't have the power in many cases to do that. A teacher told me, and I mentioned earlier, that the school principal had come to them in early June and said, this student over here has missed something like 200 classes or something, it's early June, I know they missed all this time but you have to get them through now, it's your job to get them up to scratch. Nobody is going to be successful in a program like that, certainly not the young child who missed a couple of hundred classes and then somehow it all comes together. It's a very stressful situation for everyone.

Now Kenzi referred to seeing teachers go off on leave for a semester or something, because of the stress of PowerSchool and stuff like that. I can tell you that I do know a teacher who is an excellent teacher, a very well thought-of teacher who retired a couple of years early. When I asked why, they just quite clearly said it's not what it used to be - too much time putting stuff into PowerSchool, too many initiatives. I just want to teach the kids and I don't have time to teach the kids anymore, so I'm not staying. What a loss that was to our system; I know that one first-hand.

On the other side of that, as much as you have teachers retiring, you have kids who are not thriving in there and, as a result, they are dropping out or falling back or whatever. They're not being challenged and encouraged.

These are all things that if they were new to any of us when we were summoned for the emergency session last week, there's no excuse for them being new to us any more. These are well-known things to all of us now and they are well-known things to most Nova Scotians at this stage because this has shone the light on what's happening.

People tell me, especially young students - I'm still talking about the students now, what the students are telling me - they are using textbooks that are in bad shape. To say they are in bad shape would be an understatement. The high school students said to me that some of the textbooks they're using haven't been updated since the 1990s. Now they said the 1990s like that was supposed to mean a long time ago. To me it didn't seem that long ago, but I joke a little bit, Mr. Speaker. Of course using a textbook from the 1990s in 2017 is not entirely appropriate. I don't understand how that happened in our school system.

Bill No. 75 is not going to address any of those things. In many ways it is probably going to make them worse. It's probably going to make the situation worse in our schools, that's what my fear is because as much as the Premier says we have to go back to normal and has inflammatory statements like, we have to get kids back to school - of course we all know they never left school, the teaching has been going on. Many teachers think the teaching has been more focused and more beneficial over the last while.

These types of inflammatory statements have driven a wedge, and we will have to see what the new normal is. I know that as we sit here today our system is not producing students who are ready for the world, it's just not. People I am speaking to on the weekend, even some of the people who are supportive of this bill - because I had five people who were supportive of this bill that I spoke to - when I spoke to them and asked why are you supportive of that, it's always, well, we have to get the wages under control. Then when I talked to them and said, well, you can make this about 0, 0, 1, 1 or whatever you want, but for me it's a bigger issue about education because our province is not going to benefit from a generation of kids that are not ready to produce in the world. Most people will see that.

This bill will go through, there's no question about that, but I would ask at what cost? The teacher relations are not particularly good right now and the bill doesn't address the work-to-rule. It might not be called work-to-rule anymore. We'll see what the new normal is. It won't be called work-to-rule. It doesn't make those things go away, it will still be at the teachers' decisions as to what they do or don't do, so it doesn't fix that, it has just driven a wedge with the teachers.

The litigation risk to the province is huge. Not only does this bill not fix those issues in the classroom, I believe it is probably going to make them worse - not just because of the teacher-relation thing but there is part of the bill that says that if a teacher identifies a

barrier to performing their job, to carrying out their duties, then they are to report that to their supervisor and it will be dealt with. If the supervisor can't deal with it then it goes to a committee.

I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that of the 9,000 teachers in the province, every single one of them will have a case for saying there's a barrier to them carrying out their duties, whether their class is too big, whether they don't have enough desks, whether their textbooks are outdated, whether they don't have enough computers - so imagine the logjam.

This bill will pass and perhaps on Monday of next week every teacher should be going to their immediate supervisor and listing the barriers they have to doing their job. Now isn't that going to really make the system that much more efficient than it was? It's not. There's a lot of problems with this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the litigation, the litigation risk is real and it's very real and one I was moved by a presentation at the Law Amendments Committee from Harold Doucette, former president of the Teachers Union. He articulated why he thinks there's a real problem for this government, for all of us - let's call it our collective government right now because it will be a problem for all of us, it will cost all of us. The cost of this will be money that's not going into the education system. He articulated why he thinks this will be a problem. I'll table this, but he said that the Premier had a tentative agreement, but he threw it aside and cherry-picked a contract in the form of Bill No. 75. This is an insult to the institution of full, free, and fair collective bargaining, and it is an insult to the use of this institution, the Legislature, in a supposedly democratic society. It's obvious this is a vindictive and punitive bill, Bill No. 75. I'm not quite ready to table that just yet, but in time I will.

He's talking about something that's very real, because as much as the Premier said a couple of times in Question Period that even the lawyer for the NSTU said that he thought this was fine, the Premier needs to listen a little more carefully next time. That lawyer is now saying that because of the way Bill No. 75 is constituted, because of the cherry-picking, because of rolling back, there is a very real legal risk there. I'm sure everyone has their reasons for things they say and their own objectives, but that made a lot of sense to me. It makes a lot of sense to me that the Premier would say he had three tentative agreements with two collective bargaining units. He threw all that away, and he cherry-picked bits and pieces. In doing so, he probably made himself feel a little bit better about it. Maybe he felt, well, I'll get them. I'm going to stick it to them. But he opened up liability for the province there, and I think that's a real risk.

We don't have any improvement to the education system. We do have risk to the province. I would hope that the members opposite would say it's not a bad idea to press pause on this for six months. Let's look and see if we can get a deal. Let's see if we can make some improvements or something. I think that's a very good idea because it's too important not to.

Schools are where children spend the majority of their time throughout their development. They're actually where our resources need to be prioritized. I had a school psychologist, Julia McInnes, tell me that she thinks that if we do that right, there is actually a savings to help the minister and the Premier with their fiscal envelope. If we do it right in the school system, we can offset cost that would have otherwise been incurred in other departments: through mental health services from the Department of Health and Wellness, through Community Services, through Labour and Advanced Education, and through Justice. We all know the overlap that happens between these departments. If we can get it right in Education and Early Childhood Development, we can probably save some money in the other departments, and net, it's maybe not as expensive as it might look if you do it right. I thought that made a lot of sense.

There are issues with the bill, but a teacher from the Bedford area, Robyn Cobean, pointed out to this Legislature that there are things to be thankful for about the bill and this process. She wanted to thank the Liberals for giving her the motivation to walk through the doors of this building for the first time. It's the first time she's ever been to Province House. She appreciated that this bill is what drove her and gave her that opportunity. She was thankful for that.

She's also thankful, and I am, too, that this bill has had the purpose of uniting people. It has united and engaged people at unprecedented levels. It has forced people to carry on open, honest, and meaningful conversations with each other. It has encouraged teachers to work together to share their stories and commiserate. That's a good thing that has come out of this bill. It's got teachers talking.

Another thing to be thankful for from this bill is it has allowed this Legislature to harness the power of social media. It's used social media to unite the province for a common purpose. When I look at the number of people who watched the live streams from this Legislature last week - hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people - it's very impressive, the amount of people who are starting to have their eyes opened as to what happens here in this Legislature.

These are people who will stay engaged past this emergency being solved. I know we're here because of an emergency; the Premier has told me that, that there was a big emergency we had to address here. I know we're here because of an emergency, and I know it's engaged people, but I'm thankful for this bill, on this day, because it will engage people beyond this emergency.

Robyn is right when she says that people will continue to be active and involved, and they will pursue real and meaningful change for the school system and for the students. She's thankful for this bill and the Liberal Government for creating a new generation of political activists, and I think we've all seen that.

I think there might have been some people who underestimated how teachers would react to this. I think there was a thought that if we put it out in the public that teachers make lots of money and have lots of time off, teachers would be meek and mild about that and not want to bring attention to that.

Oh boy, huh? I don't think anyone could have anticipated the reaction from teachers. Despite it all, they wanted to make a stand for education. They're making a big stand, and I'm happy to stand with them. That's why I'm opposed to this bill.

As a result of this, there's a whole new group of activists who now understand who their MLA is and know how to find them. Sadly, they often don't expect to get a response back, but they know where to find their MLA, and they will continue to seek them out.

They are also beginning to understand the process of legislation. I think people have had their eyes opened to "second reading" and "Law Amendments Committee" and "Committee of the Whole House" and "bell ringing" and "third reading." They understand how things are supposed to work, and they get to see it with all the flaws and understand that it's not always apparent that it's the will of the people.

I'm thankful that this bill has shined a line on what's happening in education. I'm thankful that it has given parents and teachers a platform to speak - and this is what Robyn is saying, that it's given them a platform. It's made parents start to understand the realities of the school system, too, that when they send their child to school each day - maybe if they knew nothing before of the realities of what's happening at school, they do now.

Maybe they didn't know that their child who struggles to read only gets one hour of resource every week, even though they're in Grade 4 and reading at a Primary level. Maybe parents didn't know that, but they do now, and they'll be demanding better now. Maybe they didn't know that the same teachers are being called away from school for mandatory PD without substitute coverage to support their child back at the school. Parents know that now.

Maybe parents didn't know how many hours were spent by teachers inputting data, minutes, and other accountability measures into a computer system, which costs millions of dollars and comes out of the Education and Early Childhood Development budget. Maybe they didn't know that, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe they didn't know that out of 30 students in their child's class, 10 may be on an IPP and 14 on adaptations, and there's only one EPA allotted to support just one teacher, and maybe three others to support all the rest. Maybe they didn't know that. Maybe they didn't understand what was happening in the classroom, but they will now.

Maybe they didn't understand that if class compositions were manageable, that if students were supported from early grades on, their child wouldn't need extra help outside

of class hours. Students would be able to manage with extra support from the teacher during class time. Maybe they didn't know that their child in high school has no seat in the classroom. Maybe they didn't know that their child's teacher spends hundreds if not thousands of their own dollars every year to ensure there's enough materials and supplies to teach lessons.

Maybe they didn't know children couldn't fail without parental consent and that failure was almost an extinct occurrence - maybe they didn't know that. Maybe parents didn't know that a child could miss over 400 school days by the time they were in upper elementary yet still pass into the next grade without meeting the outcomes, even IPP outcomes.

Maybe they didn't know that the mental health of many of our students was in crisis and there aren't enough supports through the government or through our own counsellors to deal with it. Maybe they didn't know that staff and administration work overtime to ensure there are protocols in each school so their child doesn't get physically harmed. Maybe they did not know that - they do now.

Maybe they didn't know that almost every child suffers in most classes - struggling learners, average learners, learners with special needs, and gifted learners because not one single one of them gets the attention they need or deserve. Maybe they didn't know that every child is struggling.

Maybe they didn't know there were initiatives like mandatory and documented PLCs and school improvement plans which take countless hours of time from teachers, with no documented gains. Maybe they didn't know that. Maybe they didn't know that the teachers themselves are able to conduct reading, writing, and math assessments on their own, which can give them the imperative information they need to instruct, without costing a cent or taking precious instruction time away. Maybe they didn't know that. Maybe they didn't know that teachers could actually assess where the children are at. They don't need all these programs, all these PDs, and all these different input things.

I guess we can thank the government for that. I guess we can take a moment and thank the government for educating the people of the province on what is happening in the school system. I don't think that was their intent but that's okay, we can still thank the government for bringing that to light.

Robin said: I want to thank the McNeil Liberals for the focus on fiscal responsibility . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. I remind the member that it is not proper to use the surname when addressing, even if you're using a quote.

MR. HOUSTON: I do apologize for that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank this Liberal Government for the focus on financial responsibility because it has lent to deep scrutiny by the public on government spending and perhaps the misallocation of taxpayer dollars. It certainly has shone the light on a province that is broke on one hand but has all kinds of money for wharves down in Portland or painting lines in Portland and all kinds of stuff. The public has had their eyes opened to what fiscal responsibility is really meant to mean. Why are we spending money on substitutes when, if they got rid of the time-consuming assessments, if they were just suspended, teachers could do all that stuff?

This is kind of where we're at, Mr. Speaker, that there are things to be thankful for, for this experience with this bill. They're not in the bill, they're unintended consequences for this government today.

This bill will pass and we have to figure out where do we go from here? We have 9,000-plus experts in the field every day, they can help us give a road map as to where to go. When I think back on this experience I will be thinking about some of the heroes that I met during this process, like Tammi Jardine, the first witness at the unofficial Law Amendments Committee, and she stayed to tell her story; like Ron Nugent, the guidance counsellor who told some moving stories at Law Amendments Committee of helping kids - kids calling on the weekend, kids calling at hours - and him being available to kids. That's a hero who has emerged in my mind from this process. Ken Marchand, I talked about Ken's words at second reading. He talked so eloquently about the issues that he is facing in the classroom and the stresses that teachers are under. Teachers are often crying because they can't get to the kids, which is what they want to do. Ken said, no more committees - that was the message I took from Ken.

I also took many messages from the Law Amendments Committee and the messages that have been shared with me, like Colleen Scott who said she had been teaching for 17 years, I believe, Mr. Speaker. She said she wouldn't want children in this school system; she wouldn't want her own children in the school system. She has been in the trenches, I think it was for 17 years. It's a number of years, anyway. Imagine how painful that would be for her to say that, that she wouldn't want children in this system.

There's nothing in this bill today that addresses that. Maybe in six months there might be if we take a little pause and go and look at it, maybe there will be but today there is not.

A teacher told a story that in the Primary class she had a particular student who was on the high end of the reading level there - it was in the lower grades, maybe not Primary. She got around to sitting and reading with this young student. The student said, finally you're going to sit and read with me. She was so excited that the teacher was going to sit with her. The teacher said it just brought her to tears because there's a little girl who hadn't

said anything all year, but was actually, probably every day, thinking, I wonder if this is the day the teacher is going to be able to - and as the teacher was trying to get through those students who needed it and get through everything that was required of her, this student was legitimately happy for this time with her teacher. She said it just broke her heart when she realized that that was the first time in the year that she had been able to sit with this child.

The teachers say to us that they wouldn't want kids in this system or that we're not preparing kids for the real world or that we're creating a culture of liars amongst teachers because of all the work. They voted against these agreements, as Heather Boucher said. She knew at her very core that each one of these tentative agreements that the Premier so gleefully tells us he struck, she voted against them, I believe, but she knew that at her very core those tentative agreements weren't good for the students. She was right, they weren't - and this bill is not either and, yet, here we are talking about this bill.

Where do we go from here in education? I will say about some of the people that I've connected with in this process, I actually connected with a few people whom I went to high school with whom I haven't seen since high school, and it turns out they are teachers, like Ryan Clancy and Justin Hickey, a couple of guys I hadn't seen since high school. I saw them out here at the protest and we had a nice little chat. So, thank you for that; thank you for reconnecting me with them.

I met a relative I didn't know was a relative, through this. We had a couple of emails back and forth. I believe she might be in Minister Ince's area - the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, whom she sent a few emails to and hadn't heard back. But she reached out to me and we exchanged a few emails, and in the process she went to find me on Facebook. She found my wife and realized some mutual friends and said well that's weird, why does she have these - anyway, to make a long story short, I met a relative over it, so thank you for that. So, there are good things that are happening here.

The real testament will be what happens in education from here. This bill will pass, where does education go from here. What changes do we see made? I don't know what those will be, but I hope that we see some positive changes in education for learners, and I do hope that we see some changes in this House and the decorum in this House and the treatment between members in this House. I'm very hard on this government when I believe that it's time to be hard on them, but in return, I've seen some pretty not-gracious things happen in the last week and I do want to say that I hope those days are over too.

I saw an email that was presented in the Law Amendments Committee package and it was an email that the Minister of Environment had sent to a constituent of hers. The constituent was asking the Minister of Environment if the Minister of Environment would consider voting no or crossing the floor, and her response was to cross the floor to Tim who makes fun of kids with learning disabilities . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Again, I remind the member not to use surnames and proper names when addressing members even if you're using a quote. Thank you.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you, and I apologize, Mr. Speaker. She wrote an email to a constituent saying the member for Pictou East makes fun of kids with learning disabilities. That is quite a mean-spirited thing for somebody to say.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. I've also been advised by the Clerk that the use of the word "mean-spirited" has been deemed unparliamentary in Ottawa. I believe the Speaker possibly made a ruling last week on it. We are looking through Hansard right now, but I would ask the members to refrain from that, please, for the time. Thank you.

The honourable member for Pictou East has the floor.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would try to find a word to properly describe how uncool that is. That's a disappointing thing for somebody in this Chamber to say about another member. Obviously, it's not true, and we can advance positions without that type of stuff.

The people are watching. The people are watching to see where we go from here, and they're all looking for changes to the education system; every one of us is. They're not in this bill. I don't particularly get why we're doing this right now, but the government will have their reasons and they have their majority government, so here we are. It makes me think back to what motivated me to get into politics and I wouldn't call myself a broken-glass voter at that time, but I definitely got an interest in politics because of something that happened that bothered me. When I started to kind of peel back the onion and said, well, who's making these decision? When I started to look at the process, I wasn't that impressed. I think what's happened is over the last few days 9,000, 10,000, however many people are reaching the same conclusion, they're less than impressed, too, and they are looking to see what happens next.

As I go to wrap up here, at some point today, we will be voting on this bill. We all had the time to be in our own constituencies over the weekend, meeting with our friends and neighbours and constituents and probably doing a bit of soul-searching. The vote is still hours away, so I did want to table the book I found in the library, *The Soul Searcher's Handbook*, and I'd like to offer this up for any of the members opposite who want to do a bit of soul-searching over the next few hours. The handbook may be of help to them because it's too important to get this wrong.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I would take my seat and hope that the members opposite vote their conscience on this motion. We can talk a bit later about the bill when we get there but on this motion, I hope they vote their conscience and just say

let's hit pause for six months. It's the right thing to do, it's the just thing to do, and it's certainly in the public good.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Two things - first, I've been informed that if you want to table something from this book that you should photocopy it and maybe table it at a later date, so that won't be tabled at this point in time.

Also, you referred to and read from a document from Law Amendments Committee that you were going to table that has not been tabled yet, so if you could table that. Thank you.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Mr. Speaker, well we've been here all night, and it's 7:20 a.m. I have to say that the Premier once said in 2013, in the Nova Scotia Liberal campaign platform, "Education isn't a line item in a budget, it's our future."

Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with the Premier but as I've said in this House before, it appears to me that this government seems to really know the price of everything but the value of nothing. I know this is a well-known saying but I have to say it's quite fitting today.

Since the Education and Early Childhood Development Minister is also the Chair of the Treasury Board, I have to say really that the buck stops with her because teachers are staging a province-wide strike for the first time ever in our province's history, because of the mismanagement by this government and by the minister. I believe it was her job, she was expected to simply deliver the teachers on a silver platter to this government. I believe the teachers were chosen first, as the guinea pigs, because it was the belief that they would just roll over and accept whatever was offered to them.

However, time has shown us that in fact the opposite is true and I have to say, as the NDP Critic for Education and Early Childhood Development, I am so proud to see the teachers of this province rise up and speak out in the way they have. I know that my mother, as a teacher, marched on the Legislature back in the 1990s under the Savage Government, in the Savage years, when their salaries were frozen, they were rolled back. They were treated with disrespect, they felt - they were empowered, actually, by the way they were treated, Mr. Speaker.

That was approximately 20 years ago and, of course, some of the newer, younger teachers were not around then so I don't think they are aware of some of the things that their predecessors fought for, rather like the women's movement. Some of us take it for granted what our mothers and our grandmothers and great-grandmothers had to do to fight for our rights. Yet when your rights are in danger of being taken away and, in fact, you are watching them being eroded and taken away by legislation by your own government, that

can start a fire in your belly that if not contained and if not dealt with, will simply grow and grow. That is what we're seeing now.

I noticed that a number of my colleagues mentioned the fact that we're seeing a new generation of young people rising up and having their voices heard and not being afraid to state what they're really feeling about what's going on right now. I have to say I'm proud of them, and I'm sure that on the other side of the House, deep down a number of people probably feel the same way that this is exciting. It's exciting to see Nova Scotians rise up and speak their minds especially in a world that we see right now where people's rights are being eroded south of the border in a very, very unimaginable fashion.

Here in Nova Scotia, to see our young people and our teachers - you know, the middle class - rise up and say no we're not going to put up with this, no we're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore. We have to say, my gosh, good for you; let's take our hats off to you. Whether or not they win this battle, I believe they will win the war in the end. As soon as this bill is brought up and appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, then the proof will be in the pudding.

So, Mr. Speaker, this past week or so, thousands of teachers have come to Province House to tell this government what they think of their heavy-handed legislated contract and teachers who spoke at Law Amendments Committee were very clear that this bill addresses nothing that they need. The only thing that the government has accomplished is really creating a toxic environment in education. By pushing this bill through, that is not going to be changed, it's going to get worse. In fact, as well, having a politicized, energized group of teachers - 9,300 of them, not to mention their mothers and fathers, their aunts and uncles, their own children, their brothers and sisters, and their neighbours - I think that we will very soon see that this fight is not over and will in fact continue for the next few years until this bill is either dismantled or a new bill put in place under a new government.

So, disrespecting and dismissing the concerns of the people who are at the front lines of education is not the way forward, Mr. Speaker. Legislating a contract like Bill No. 75 does nothing to solve the crisis in the classroom and now the government's relationship with educators has been irreparably damaged. I'm hearing this from thousands of teachers. The amount of emails that I've received are unbelievable. They just keep coming in, pouring in and I haven't even seen one yet where it said to me that they think that the government is doing the right thing. I hear some members on the government benches saying, oh well, actually, I'm receiving more emails saying that we're doing the right thing. I don't know, they're not hearing from the same people as we are and I really would be surprised at that.

The other thing is, I'm told that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development was overheard saying, oh, this will just pass, this will blow over. Well, I'm here to tell you it's not going to blow over; it's not going to just pass by. I can tell you, I also heard that in our government when they were doing cuts to education and I said at the

time this is not going to blow by and I was proved correct in the end because after all there's only seven of us over here on this side of the House now.

I also have to say that I'm hearing from teachers that they're feeling completely undervalued, unappreciated for the work that they give day and night to their students. I am hearing that some of them are saying that they give 110 per cent every day of the week, and they don't care necessarily about the salary issue but that changes need to be made in the education system in the province. The children that they're teaching will be the leaders, the doctors, lawyers, nurses, NSGEU members, plumbers, postal workers, and caretakers of the future. Do we really want someone looking after us that hasn't got the skills that we could provide them with? That was actually one of the suggestions made by one of my constituents, Cathy Weldon, who I went to school with and is now a teacher. Her mother actually was a teacher and they're shaking their heads saying, why are we going through this, why now?

You know, the minister chose to read also at one point very selectively here in the House and this was a real big concern of mine. At one point, she chose to read selectively from two letters that she'd received from the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and these letters, one from 2014 and the other from 2015, were both complaints from the union that the minister had acted in breach of the Teachers' Collective Bargaining Act, contrary to her duty to bargain in good faith.

Oddly, the minister failed to mention these important facts on the floor of the House, and instead - she didn't mention the context - she tabled them and suggested that the NSTU does not speak for teachers. But 96 per cent of teachers gave the union a strike mandate that same week, so I beg to disagree.

Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, which is a department and sector that is supposed to teach children good behaviour, what they should and should not be doing, would selectively choose one sentence out of a complete letter and then table the letter and use that as evidence.

I'm really glad that I asked the Page at the time to get me a copy of those two letters so I could actually read them for myself, because otherwise it was - I won't say "misleading," because I know that is unparliamentary language, but it certainly gave the wrong impression.

In fact, in July 2012, the minister - in between being the minister for the Progressive Conservative Party and now the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for the Liberal Party, because out of 10 years, she's been the Education Minister for six of those 10 years. She said:

"What Nova Scotia parents and teachers are most outraged about is the lack of funding to support students in the classroom. The

complexities within the classroom are greater today than ever before. Students bring a variety of behavioral and learning challenges to the classroom. Many cannot function without the support of an assistant. Many behaviors are disruptive and interfere with teachers teaching and students learning. Many students have attention challenges and they are unable to focus in a busy environment. Every one of these students deserves the support they need in order to be successful. All students need a positive learning environment so they can be successful.”

I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say, the teachers are saying this very thing to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development now. They are crying out and saying that things need to change, and they need to change now. I can't help but mention, again, that if the minister has been the Education and Early Childhood Development Minister for six years out of 10, why didn't she start to do this when she was minister the first time? Why didn't she do more and make sure that these things were addressed, instead of blaming the last government, the NDP, which was only in for four years? I really don't understand that, and neither do many teachers.

Again, this government's approach to education seems to be a refusal to listen to the people who are actually working in the classroom every day. They seem to be obsessed with pushing forward their own agenda with no concern about the impact on teachers, students, and parents. As an example, I will give December 5th, when in response to the union saying that they were going to go into work-to-rule, the Education and Early Childhood Development Minister announced suddenly, on a Saturday, that she was going to close schools - well, not close them, but lock students out of school.

I was at the press conference when she was asked when she knew that the kids would actually be safe, and she said it was on the Friday - and yet she made the announcement on a Saturday. So why would she make an announcement on a Saturday that she was locking kids out of school because she felt it wasn't safe, when they knew on the Friday that they would be safe?

One of the things that also concerned me about this, which many of my constituents have come up and discussed with me at various public events over the last month, was that the education assistants felt extremely hurt by some of the things the Education and Early Childhood Development Minister said. They felt they were thrown under the bus when she was scrambling about trying to find people to blame. In fact, one of the sectors she blamed was the education assistants because she said, we didn't know if they were going to be there to meet the buses for the special needs students.

Mr. Speaker, that was a completely different union. That was NSGGEU workers and CUPE workers, not Nova Scotia Teachers Union workers. So why would the minister even suggest such a thing. Education assistants were extremely hurt by that and now they are feeling extremely frustrated by this government as well.

Another quote that I'd like to remind people about right now, that also I will table, Mr. Speaker, is from the Premier, dated July 5, 2013. That quote says,

“You know, Mr. Speaker, the real foundation of any collective bargaining is the fact that the employer and employee have to be at the table feeling equal, feeling that they are both feeling respected, feeling that they are both having their voices heard, and negotiating and working out what is an agreement that will potentially last for years down the road. In order for that agreement to have any kind of substance, both the employer and employee have to feel valued at the end of the day when that agreement is finished. It is never easy.”

“Mr. Speaker, I have not been part of a collective bargaining situation, I have not been at the table, but I can only imagine how difficult that is on both sides, to sit down and basically negotiate and hammer out terms and an agreement of a path forward of employment in this province. It's an important part of the democratic process in the Province of Nova Scotia. We have a history in this province of men and women fighting to the very end to preserve and protect that right to strike in the Province of Nova Scotia.”

Again, that is dated July 5, 2013. I will table that.

Mr. Speaker, on that note I have to say that the heavy-handed actions of this government demonstrate the importance of the democratic process. This government would like nothing more than to just pass this misguided bill as quickly as possible with as little opposition as possible, which is why the Government House Leader has chosen to bring us in, drag us in, in the middle of the night, at 12:01 a.m. - how many times now - and try and rush it through, get it through so that as few people as possible would be in the galleries to actually watch and hear the proceedings and nobody would be at home paying any attention, watching it on Legislative TV.

I have to say that because of this bill, Legislative TV has become a very popular channel. It is interesting to watch it when it is live streamed because in fact you can see when the different people speak, little hearts flying up on the screen or little angry faces. It's actually amusing if it wasn't such a sad occasion that we are actually here for.

Mr. Speaker, there are rules that should be followed when it comes to democracy. Opposition MLAs are doing our very best to voice our concerns at length. We will continue to do so. Hundreds of members from the public signed up to appear before the Law Amendments Committee, some were even lucky enough to present. But teachers, parents and students are organizing peacefully and, albeit sometimes quite loud, they are protesting the actions of this government. To do so is their democratic right. I admire their energy and their purpose.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, of the 300 to 400 people who were not allowed to speak at Law Amendments Committee, I would like to acknowledge the ones who were. Of those people - I was there for a large number of them: Joan Ling, Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union; Lori MacKinnon, Timothy MacLeod, Jodi Asbell-Clarke, Bill Murphy, Susan Lariviere-Jenkins, Keri Butler, John Walker, Nancy Doyle, Cherie Abriel, Crystal Isart, Danerra Spears, Christine Van Zoost, Turk MacDonald, Allister Waden, Nan McFadgen - president of CUPE Nova Scotia, Ron MacIntosh, Ryan Lutes, Peter Day, Stephanie Walsh, Judy Haiven, Chris Dorion, Chris Smith, Shelley Morse - who is a former president of the Teachers Union, Angela Deagle, Grant Dart - the servicing rep and coordinator for education sector at CUPE - Scott Purcell, Larry Haiven, Brian Forbes - another former NSTU president.

I have to say thank you and congratulations to Mr. Larry Haiven and to Judy Haiven for all the wonderful work they did on Parents for Teachers, organizing that and getting parents vocal and active in this province. Teachers have told me that it's the first time ever that they've seen parents stepping up and speaking out in favour of teachers and supporting them. They say they're so used to teacher-bashing going on, people speaking out and trying to make teachers feel bad about the fact that they have the two-month summer. But many of them have to come back in the summer, Mr. Speaker, and do work to prepare for the Fall.

There are many things about the teaching profession that people don't understand. They said that they were so heartened by all the parents and the students who actually came out and fought for them this past while. I have to say congratulations to the people who started that movement, Larry and Judy Haiven among others.

Linda MacNeil, Brent Fraser, Karin Martin, Tara Arseneau, Sabrina Fenyvesi, Dustin Linden Smith, Darlene Bereta, Hope Lemoine, Kate Ervine - another member of Parents for Students, teacher Mark Breaugh, Rana Zaman, Dan MacDonald, Lori Walton, Alan Joyce, Wally Fiander - another Nova Scotia Teachers Union representative, Sean Gibson, Teresa Pelly, Shelley Bembridge, Shelley Hersey, Clark Swim, Harold Doucette - who is a former president of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the father of Liette Doucet the present Teachers Union president, Fern MacLennan, Achilles Huxel, Matthew Murphy, Sean Hanifan, Ron Nugent, Heather Boucher, Paul Wozny, Cheryl Clark, Ken Marchant, Katrina Maclean, Devon Ashleigh, Kelly Cooper, and Sandra Mullen - the acting president of NSGEU.

I just have to say, those people were so interesting. They didn't lose my attention while I was there. It was really heartening to hear from them but also heartbreaking to hear some of the stories and to see the tears that were real. They were real. They were coming from the heart, and I just have to say thank you so much to all of them for showing up.

I would also like to read a statement from the PC Leader from October 4, 2016. The Progressive Conservative Leader responded that day to the decision by teachers to reject that latest contract. He said, "Nova Scotians will be disappointed that an agreement could not be worked out that protects the school year. Premier McNeil's . . ." the Premier's ". . . refusal to address meaningful classroom reform has led to this unfortunate situation."

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I remind the member to not use surnames and address them by the proper terms.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River has the floor.

MS. ZANN: Yes, I caught myself and said "the Premier." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to start that again. "Nova Scotians will be disappointed that an agreement could not be worked out that protects the school year. Premier McNeil's refusal . . ." - oh, my God. I did it again. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Maybe you might not want to start over.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River has the floor.

MS. ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

"Nova Scotians will be disappointed that an agreement could not be worked out that protects the school year. [The Premier's] refusal to address meaningful classroom reform has led to this unfortunate situation. Our students must be the main priority now. Nova Scotia parents will not take kindly to further political game-playing with their children's education. [The Premier] currently has many tools at his disposal to avoid a disruption in the school year. We expect him to use the tools he has to ensure there is no interruption in classroom learning."

So on saying this, I have to talk about the fact that many teachers were puzzled by this because the Leader of the Official Opposition had been going around and telling teachers that he supported them and supported the union, but then in this piece of - I guess it's a press release - he seemed to be saying that in fact the Premier should be using every

single tool at his disposal instead of negotiating and getting back to the bargaining table, which is what we have been saying all along. And I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say that tonight I met a wonderful little girl; her name is Hailey Varner. I met her outside before the House sat, and she's nine years old, she's in Grade 4, and she has a message for all of us. She says:

“Hello, My name is Hailey, I am 9 years old, and am in grade 4. Yes I am just a kid! I enjoy playing with my friends and acting like a kid . . . I also enjoy watching CNN, and talking about politics with my grandparents and mom, which is what I want to do when I get older . . . All you guys have been saying is that you're doing this is for the children, and the children's future! But none of you have actually sat down to talk to kids. You think that just because we're kids we don't have a clue what is going on! Heck I don't even know if you guys will actually read this. But here I sit writing it anyways, in hopes that someone will read it and change their minds.”

I'm just going to read a little, tiny bit more - just to get to my point:

“First of all just because you are going to pass a bill making teachers work again, doesn't mean that anything is going to change, especially since you're forcing them to do things that they don't want to do. They are not going to want to do the extras outside of their contract you're making them take. So there will still be no proms, no breakfast programs, and no school run sports teams. You guys aren't changing anything! I watched the news when BC government tried to do the same thing, and they were taken to court and lost and cost the government thousands of dollars . . . that's a lot of money compared to what the teachers want.”

Mr. Speaker, this little girl is so smart; I have to say she gives me hope.

In the very end, she says: “please vote no to Bill 75! Not for the teachers! Not for the Parents!!

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The member is stretching it quite a bit on reading the entire statement, and I would ask her to read an excerpt and then table the document please.

MS. ZANN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I've already skipped a whole bunch of it and now I'm going right to the end which is just a sentence here. She ends on this note,

which I think is very important. She says “please vote no to Bill 75! Not for the teachers! Not for the Parents!! But for the children!!”

For the children - she says we are being bullied and we need to see public figures standing up for themselves and for the future of this province because unless you . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. That’s a bit more than one sentence. I would ask the member to table the document, please.

MS. ZANN: I will be tabling it, Mr. Speaker, but she wrote a very long sentence at the end. She is nine after all. Anyway, she just says that she believes it will financially ruin this province if we pass this bill because in the end it’s going to cost us because it’s going to go to court, to the Supreme Court. And she says “when I am older and I am the premier I will probably still be financially cleaning up this mess if you vote “Yes” . . . so please vote “NO”!!” Hailey Varner.

So, I think, from the mouths of babes, Mr. Speaker, from the mouths of babes. We need to listen to the children of this province and to the teachers of this province and to the parents who are trying to tell us that this is not the right thing to do.

There are more than 9,300 teachers in Nova Scotia; there are more than 118,000 students enrolled in public schools in Nova Scotia; there are 377 public schools listed in the Education and Early Childhood Development Department’s directory and the last teachers’ contract expired in July 2015.

Now we know that the first tentative agreement was rejected, on December 1, 2015; 94 per cent of members voted and 61 per cent rejected the deal. Teachers were encouraged to vote for the deal by their union because Shelley Morse, who was president at the time, told her members that the executive recommended the deal only because of the threat of having a contract imposed. In fact, she said, in the face of impending Draconian legislation, it was decided to recommend acceptance of this offer.

She also said that teachers are frustrated with their working conditions and would like to see those addressed in a contract. That was back in December 1, 2015. So we’ve been hearing this now for some time.

That particular recommendation was panned by six former Nova Scotia Teachers Union presidents. In a written statement, the former union leaders bemoaned what they called “the abandonment of the normal collective bargaining procedures”. They claimed the process was further undermined by the threat of legislation should the union not accept what the government demanded.

Then on October 4, 2016, 94 per cent of teachers voted on the second tentative agreement, 70 per cent voted to reject the deal. So this failed deal, which had been

recommended by the union executive again, had the same financials as the last contract. It froze the long service award for current teachers, made it unavailable to new teachers . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. I would remind the member that if she is reading from a statement that she is going to table, to only read partial.

MS. ZANN: That wasn't a statement, I said "quote" for the statement and I can table that but this is not a statement, these are just facts.

The contract froze the long service award for current teachers and made it unavailable to new teachers and the deal also contained basically a "me too" clause that gave the union a better deal on long service awards if one could be negotiated between the government and another union.

Then Liette Doucet, the president of the NSTU now, said - and this is a quote - "I think teachers are tired of talking about what their issues are and they are not being listened to by the government. Teachers have a job that is virtually impossible to do right now. They need to be valued. They need to be thought of as professionals. They need the government to listen to what they are saying."

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development said, and this is a quote, "The collective bargaining process has run its course. This is the second time we reached a tentative agreement with different bargaining teams from the NSTU that was rejected by the membership. We will not be returning to the table, we now await the union's decision."

On February 8, 2017, 106 per cent of the union voted on the third tentative agreement, with the added numbers accounting for substitute and active reserve teachers; 78 per cent voted to reject that deal. So this time around, teachers were being offered a contract that included two paid days of leave for personal development, which was a source of controversy, and has now been removed from the current contract. A committee to review the workplace concerns was also carried forward from the previous offer and would include \$10 million a year for two years to bring about changes.

Now again, as I've mentioned earlier in this House, there are problems with the current deal because, for one thing, there were originally four Nova Scotia Teachers Union members supposed to be on the council, that has now gone down to one, so three of them have been removed.

Yes, there are nine classroom teachers included but again, unfortunately those teachers will be chosen by superintendents and those superintendents are management positions and therefore, directly connected to government so it will be very difficult for teachers who are to speak their own minds really since they will toe the line probably to the superintendents and, therefore, the government. Teachers have told me that this is a

huge problem for them, and they oftentimes feel intimidated and that they cannot speak their minds under normal circumstances either to the board or to the superintendents, because if they do, they are labelled as troublemakers. That is not a very good environment for people to be working in.

As Liette Doucet has also said recently, she wasn't surprised by the result but that it's not a case of disconnect between the union and the membership. She said that it's a case of the government unwilling to make the improvements that are necessary, what teachers are asking for. In particular, she said she thinks that teachers are unhappy about the lack of immediate steps to address classroom conditions and workload as well as the end of the long service award. I would agree with that. Attendance and discipline policies could be brought in right away and would go a long way towards building trust with teachers. I'm going to table both of those pieces of paper.

In talking to teachers, I have been told that more supports are definitely needed and that they feel that teachers are expected to go above and beyond working many hours more than they're contracted, to keep up with the demands of data entry, new curriculum, and complex students needs. If the government respects teachers as professionals, then they would have met with them at the bargaining table and been more willing to listen.

Even the fact that the Premier was videotaped at four o'clock in the afternoon when you could see the sun shine in the window - when he was supposed to be doing it after the negotiations were completed, which didn't finish until 6:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. when it was already dark - shows that he was not prepared to listen and he had already made up his mind when he said that he was disappointed that things had fallen apart. I'm very sure the courts will be very interested in that piece of information as part of the case when they prove that in fact things were not done fairly in fair bargaining.

If the government also respected teachers as professionals, they would not have accused them of putting students' safety at risk; they would have known that no teacher in this province would do anything that wasn't in the best interests of students. If the government respected teachers as professionals, they wouldn't have pushed them to the province-wide strike - the first province-wide strike in our history - because teachers are professionals and they know best what is needed in their classrooms. That's why we wanted to hear from them all at the Law Amendments Committee, and that's why honestly, they should be returning to the bargaining table.

The only reason this bill is being pushed through is because this government wants to balance the budget on the backs of teachers and other professionals, the middle class of Nova Scotia, people who work hard. Even though they may have better pay than some others in this province, it's still not a whole lot. I know many teachers where there's two teachers in one family and they might have three children, and they're barely able to just pay the bills including child care, because our child care bills are still extremely high in this province which is another thing we need to look at.

Teachers have been asking for improvements in the classroom, and although those words are in the title of this bill, Bill No. 75, there's really nothing in the bill that will have an impact on those issues that have been shared by the many teachers who have come here to speak and those sharing their stories online. I want to take this opportunity to thank the many teachers who have been sharing their stories online, on Facebook, in social media, on Twitter, emailing all of us here. As I've said before, I have been receiving thousands and thousands of emails, more than I've ever received in the eight years - almost eight years - that I've been an MLA. I've never received this many emails before, and I have to say they're all well written. They are personable, they are passionate, and these people are extremely, extremely upset.

But this bill is the final straw. It guarantees the relationship between the government, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the teachers will be unworkable. It will not be able to make progress in classroom conditions in this toxic environment that the government has created.

Teachers know what classroom improvements are needed. They don't need a forced contract and an unworkable commission on classroom conditions. Classrooms will be improved when the government is willing to make the investments immediately that teachers have asked for. Classrooms will be improved when teachers are focused on teaching, rather than the pointless data entry and duplicated assessments.

Teachers have no faith in the mechanisms for classroom improvement established by this bill. The Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements Bill has left teachers feeling demoralized and underappreciated. That's going to take years and years to overcome.

The other thing I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, is that as I said, we've been sitting in this House throughout the night now many, many times, and at the Law Amendments Committee teacher after teacher, presenter after presenter, came to this government with one request: withdraw this bill. But the Premier has been given the opportunity to do the right thing, this government has been given the opportunity to do the right thing, and so far they have not taken that opportunity. I'm here to say it's never too late to do the right thing, and the members of this House can vote "no."

Clearly teachers think the province is in a very different state than the Premier does. His government has brought about the first province-wide strike in our history, and during a recent address to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Premier made sure to acknowledge his friends from the banks and congratulated them on their record profits. Well, why then did he give the banks \$24 million, \$21 million, and another \$21 million - Royal Bank, TD Canada Trust, and Butterfield's offshore bank in Bermuda? Why give them millions of dollars when they're already having record profits, when our teachers are here slaving away and deserve what they have asked for?

They don't deserve to have their salaries frozen and they don't deserve to have their long service awards taken away. Those were bargained for by past governments. They accepted other things in their contracts, things that were taken away. Now this government shows up and takes away more, and yet the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Premier have the gall to say that nothing is being taken away? I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but no wonder teachers think this province is in a very different state. I don't blame them for being upset.

During the Law Amendments Committee, we heard from a teacher who said she found out about a new piece of curriculum, the coding, on the same day that it was actually announced to the public, and she wasn't given any training to be able to put it into force. In fact, I'm getting questions from teachers saying, why aren't they being given professional work days in order to learn how to use these new techniques and these new pieces of curriculum? They're just thrown at them and they're expected to just do it automatically.

As we heard from one teacher at the Law Amendments Committee, Mr. Peter Day said there is some good in many of the initiatives that are introduced but it's like when you get to a buffet and you overfill your plate, it won't all fit on the plate and there's no room for dessert.

I just wonder how far this is going to go, Mr. Speaker, because teachers really need a break. In fact, what I'm also hearing from teachers right now is that math teachers are saying kids are doing better now on their math tests because of work-to-rule. Why is that? Because they're not staying after school and giving hours and hours of their free time - not being paid for it, free time - to stay and reteach the class that the kids weren't paying attention to the first time. This time, because the kids know there won't be any after-school hours for them, they're actually paying attention in the classroom, which is the way it's supposed to be.

Teachers are telling me they're actually breathing a sigh of relief in that they're enjoying teaching again, instead of rushing around and feeling that they've got too much crammed on that plate with no room for dessert. Teachers are saying they're finally enjoying time with their families. They're enjoying being able to leave school and go to their home lives and actually have a life.

Mr. Speaker, every time the Premier says he's going to get those teachers "back to work," it frustrates them so much, because they're at work. They don't understand what he means by that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. In your last bit of time that you have left, I'd ask that you come back to the hoist motion and talk about the hoist.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River has the floor.

MS. ZANN: Finally, I just want to say that the unions themselves also feel that this bill is a slap in the face to them, and the reason why we want to see this bill come back six months from now is to give time for the various things teachers are asking for to actually be put into action. Teachers feel that their union rights are being eroded. It's giving them much more time to get active. I think this government has set a fire under them, as I've mentioned.

They also feel that if we don't stop right now and take a pause, take a breathing space, and look into exactly what it is - some of these things won't cost very much money, Mr. Speaker, and the \$20 million that they say is being put aside for this committee, which the teachers don't want anyway - the teachers don't want it, and the union doesn't want it. They're saying, why don't we just take a pause and take six months and come back to it at that point in time and see how much the government has been able to implement of the things the teachers actually do want?

Finally, I have to say - Mr. Speaker, could you tell me how much time I have left?

MR. SPEAKER: The clock on the wall says 13 minutes and 53 seconds.

MS. ZANN: Oh, okay. I thought you meant I only had a couple of minutes left.

MR. SPEAKER: No. I said in your summations, when you're going to close up, to go back to the hoist, please.

The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River has the floor.

MS. ZANN: I'm not summing up yet. Thank you.

I had another one of my constituents write in to me. She's a senior, and she was extremely upset. She's been writing to a lot of the different MLAs. She wrote to me, and she said: You know, Lenore, I stayed up late and watched Legislative TV the other night, and I have to say that you've given me hope that a political representative actually listens to the citizens of the province. She said: You've already shown that the voters made a good choice when they voted for you. She said she'd followed the emergency sitting on the Eastlink channel until after 2 a.m. or 3 a.m., and she said students, teachers, and parents appreciate my efforts.

This is an example of what we can do for our constituents when it comes to things like this. We're expected to deal with caseloads in our communities, which we do. We're expected to look at the larger picture of legislation and different types of legislation that

we can either introduce, if we're in government, or we can do Private Members' Bills if we're in Opposition. When bills like this come forward, which we feel are detrimental to our constituents and to the province, then it's our duty to stand up and speak our minds and to speak for those who are not here to speak. That's what we're voted in for, Mr. Speaker.

To get these kinds of messages from our constituents thanking us for this work that we're doing makes me feel like my job is fulfilled. I feel fulfilled, and I think the members on the government benches would also wish that they were getting some more support from people. Perhaps if they were to consider an alternate solution, which is to say no to this vote, then they might feel like their consciences are free and fulfilled as well.

This one lady who's a senior says that she's been around for three-quarters of a century, and because of the current winter situation, it would have added more stress if she had appeared to state her views or ask questions in person. Then she goes on to say: My blood pressure goes up high when I even see or hear the Premier implying that teachers are hurting students and their parents.

She says that she feels frustrated because it appears to be an attempt by the province to erode the rights that were fought for and that some of our ancestors actually died trying to protect. She asks, if this is to be casually allowed to happen, then what about the protection of other rights and privileges, the rights and privileges that were granted for the protection of citizens, residents of this province and Canada?

She asks, what happens to collective bargaining in a situation like this? Bill No. 75 proves what will happen. Will unions be done away with because they will have no way of protecting any worker in public or private jobs? She asks, what's the hurry? If the province is starting this tactic, won't other businesses see the province's action and follow suit?

Again, I think this speaks to this idea. Why are we ramming this bill through in the middle of the night? Why are we continuing on when we could wait six months? Give it six months, do what we can. Take a look at the list of the suggestions from teachers and from the Teachers Union and implement as many of them as possible, and then take a look. Maybe we'll be on the road to where we need to go with education.

She says: I'm really sorry, but I worry about what my family and my grandchildren will have to face now and in the future with this bill. What will I face as I age? Folklore used to indicate that northern people would put their old on ice floes to float away when they were of no further use to them. Will our rights be eroded so much that when it comes to health benefits and budgets, seniors and disadvantaged people will have their rights to good health care eroded?

I have to mention, on this note, that I'm hearing that seniors will actually not be consulted as they were promised before on health care and Pharmacare. This is happening while we are here debating a different bill. Again, why the rush? Why are we here doing

this when there are so many other issues that we could be paying attention to right now? This is not an emergency. Children are not in dire need. They are not in danger, as this government has tried to say over and over and over again. Parents, teachers, and students are saying, we don't get it. What's the rush? Why are you doing this? What is the emergency? How dare you say that teachers would put children at risk? They wouldn't.

Finally, my constituent wants to say to us that on Valentine's Day, that special day and the beginning of Teacher Appreciation Week, she felt that the emergency meeting with a storm going on likely cramped time for many trying to get to the emergency and left them less or no time to spend with their loved ones. More than the Premier, MLAs, assistants, legislative workers, and other interested people who had to appear at that emergency situation could have been put in danger from the storm and whiteouts. Was it enough of an emergency to risk people being out in the storm trying to get there?

I have to say, I'm glad that the government finally saw the light and cancelled that particular session, but they could have done it earlier. They could have done it beforehand and let people know ahead of time that we would be doing it the following day or else later in the week. Again, what is the emergency? Why don't we wait? What is the big rush? Is it because there's an election coming? Is it because the government wants to have their Finance Minister announce a balanced budget in the Spring?

What is the point of that when so many people are being hurt? So many people are feeling the pinch, and they don't understand. They feel betrayed. They were promised different.

I don't have this particular quote, but the Premier went to *The Chronicle Herald* in 2013 and promised - guaranteed - union workers that they were going to be respected by this government, that the Liberal Party believes in collective bargaining, and that union people and nurses and teachers and filmmakers were going to be respected. Filmmakers were promised their Film Tax Credit would be kept and then, as soon as they got in government, they pulled the rug out from under their feet and did the opposite. Mr. Speaker, people want integrity these days in their government, and integrity means doing what you say you're going to do.

Mr. Speaker, I don't blame these teachers and other union workers and our filmmakers, and even the seniors of this province, for feeling like they are being duped, they are being led by the nose, they feel their voices are not important enough to be heard and to be acted upon.

I have to say also that another one of my constituents is concerned - her name is Tracy Hilliard - and she is concerned about the definition of democracy and that it's not being followed. She says, "Government for the people by the people. I learned this in elementary school many years ago. I so enjoyed learning civics and being taught about what a free and wonderful province and country we lived in. Yes, I said lived. Over the

past couple of months I have seen how living freely in our wonderful province has been taken away at warp speed with absolutely no regard to the definition of democracy.”

So, again, we’re hearing “warp speed,” people are saying this is happening too fast. She goes on to say - one last part, “Teachers were not permitted to continue negotiating (regardless of whether or not 3 different tentative agreements were reached with two different NSTU executives). They should have been permitted to continue until an agreement was reached by both parties whether that involved a new team, a conciliator, an arbitrator or whatever other means were available. All possibilities were not explored. Teachers were told how it was going to be and that is unacceptable.”

I’ll table that, Mr. Speaker. I’ll also table the other letter that I quoted from, by Carol Tredwell.

What we can do, Mr. Speaker, is address things as a government rather than thinking of new ways to punish children who are struggling in our classrooms and punishing teachers, because teachers feel this is a punitive bill, they feel it’s a punitive contract. So, here’s what we can do - we can put class caps in place across all grade levels, as our NDP caucus has presented to this government. They presented a bill, put class caps in place across all grade levels.

They’ve done it in the Province of New Brunswick - why can’t we do it here? - provide teachers with the supports they need to do what they do best: teach; hire more educational assistants; provide better access to health care; make investments to ensure that all children in the province have healthy food to eat; hire more teachers who specialize in special needs; hire more guidance counsellors; hire more gymnastic teachers and movement teachers; hire more music, art, and drama teachers; hire more professional artists to come visit schools across the province and engage children and youth in various outlets for their energy and their creativity and their story-telling abilities - and let’s give them the time to breathe and to dream, because that’s what children need as well.

Children need to be able to move every day. Gym teachers are telling me that one hour per week is not enough. No wonder we have problems with kids who are acting out when they’re not getting enough exercise. A lot of them are hungry, a lot of them have problems going on at home, and teachers are expected to be the be-all and end-all now - they are expected to be the policeman of the classroom of the school, they are expected to be the psychologist, they are expected to be the counsellors, and they are expected to be the mothers and fathers.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that teachers deserve not only our respect, but our thank you, our appreciation, and right now they are feeling completely demoralized, and that has to change. I would suggest that if anybody can get out there and thank a teacher today, please do so. Teachers have been crying out for our help, and this government really is

refusing to listen, and they keep trying to throw the union and the teachers and the former NDP Government under the bus, and this is unacceptable.

As one gentleman, Paul Wozney, a high school teacher said in the Law Amendments Committee, I have 34 students in my classroom, each day, in an hour-long class that means there is less than a minute and forty-five seconds for each student - that is unworkable. As our Leader Gary Burrill says, teachers, parents, and students have said our education system is in crisis, and the Liberals essentially told them to shut up. The message from the Premier to the children of our province is that they are not as important as balancing the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that New Democrats are proud to have been standing up in this House, in the Legislature all week long, to ensure that the voices of parents, students, and teachers are heard while the Liberals have been cutting off debate and holding overnight sessions under the cover of dark. With that, given the late hour, I'd like to make a motion . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MS. ZANN: . . . to adjourn debate for the rest of the day.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre to speak on Bill No. 75. (Interruption) I'm sorry the time was up.

MS. ZANN: ... I had four seconds.

MR. SPEAKER: No, you didn't.

MS. ZANN: Yes, I did.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to stand here this morning; I actually waited all night to say a few words; however the time is here. I hope that speaking on this particular hoist I will speak about perhaps what it was like, what's happening now, and maybe going into the future why it's probably important that we consider hoisting this particular bill, and, the bill we're referring to of course is Bill No. 75 - Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017) Act. Again, by hoisting it and pushing it down the road perhaps a number of months, it will give everyone the opportunity to examine it very thoroughly, talk to the people that it's affecting, and perhaps come up with a better solution.

The entire process was flawed. The opportunity for free and fair collective bargaining did not exist in this negotiation. I don't think that's any surprise to anyone

because the government through all these proceedings used somewhat intimidation factors to obtain compliance and held unconstitutional legislation over teachers' heads from the first day of the process. That's why we will be facing a court challenge, that's why we will be spending millions and millions of dollars and, perhaps, if we hoist this particular bill for the time being, we can avoid a catastrophe because the province certainly cannot afford a dollar let alone millions and millions of dollars as we go through the judicial system.

Basically, no one can agree that an agreement by force is an agreement. So, as I speak, I want to speak on behalf of the 9,200 teachers that perhaps didn't have a voice at the Law Amendments Committee. We have heard throughout the night that approximately 400 presenters signed up and roughly 100, give or take a few, had their voices heard at the Law Amendments Committee. The way I'm feeling right now, barging this through, pushing this Bill No. 75 through - shame on the Premier, shame on the minister, and for that matter on any Liberal MLA that is going to support and vote for this Bill No. 75.

During the Law Amendments Committee, it was disappointing to see the lack of interest by some of the members, lack of respect - a few members actually challenging the presenters and interrupting them. Basically, they were there to tell their heartfelt stories, to tell the reality of today's classrooms, and they certainly didn't deserve that.

To support this particular bill and not to support hoisting this bill tells me that it's obvious that you don't know what's happening in our classrooms today. You have a rough idea of what may be happening, but you really don't know unless you walk in the shoes of a resource teacher, an educational assistant.

Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking perhaps from many hats - one is an MLA, also one is a former school teacher, also a former administrator, also a vice-principal at one time who was responsible for the resource centre, and a principal who was responsible for the entire school, including a special ed centre - plus I had six children who went through the school system, and my wife also is a former teacher of 32 years at the junior high level.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion this is a lose-lose situation. It's a loss for students, it's a loss for teachers, and it's a situation where I really don't think any positive improvements will occur. We all know that teachers have been overwhelmed by the demands of the classroom. Today there are too many challenges in the classroom - there are academic ones, cognitive behavioural challenges for the teachers and others who work in our school system. We have too many students needing resources due to behavioural and mental health issues.

We certainly do not have enough mental health assistants in our schools. I've been into a lot of the schools - and I'm sure you have also - and regardless if it's elementary, middle school or high school, they tell me that is one of their major concerns, not being able to reach out and help these students who are suffering from anxiety, panic attacks,

depression, et cetera. Difficulties in inclusive classrooms where there's not enough staff to assist students with learning disabilities, again, is a major problem.

Basically I think what happened, Mr. Speaker, is over the years they created this model of inclusive classrooms. It was a good model on paper and in theory, however the practicality of it, the reality of it is not working. Why isn't it working? It's not working because the support systems and the human resources were not given to the classrooms to make it work. That's why we are here today debating this particular bill.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thinking of the situation we have in our schools today, just imagine teachers routinely being attacked, abused by students. Of course it's not happening in all classrooms, but it's happening in too many. Teachers going home, leaving work with scratch marks on them, with bruises, bite marks and so on, this is more common than not.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked to too many teachers who have said they have been slapped and punched by students. Often these students are young elementary students, so something is wrong with our system. We have to sit back, maybe hoist this bill, have a look at these things and perhaps change gears.

The teachers are crying for additional psychologists. If there's anything that we need in our school system today - and again I realize, Mr. Speaker, we don't have the dollars for everything we need but we have to start somewhere - we have to at least add some things in to make some of these classrooms manageable. There are so many students that are in need.

Again, we have situations across the province, Mr. Speaker, where we have a school psychologist responsible for four, five, six schools - maybe 1,000 or more students. That is a big caseload and often they don't have anyone to replace them when they are tied up with other things that they're responsible for. When you have a school psychologist running from school to school, and that is the case - I have witnessed this myself when I was in the school system, begging for a psychologist to come. We would have a list and very seldom would we get through that list as the year went on, because they didn't have the time to take care of their caseload.

We as MLAs have to step up to the plate. Not tomorrow, not next week, or not next year - we have to start this very minute. We need the commitment to start improving our system today, and I think we can do that by hoisting this particular bill and rolling up our sleeves and getting to work.

Our children remain our most precious resource, and I think we are letting them down. We are actually failing them. The people that can do something about this were turning their heads in another direction. Imagine a class of 78 Grade 6 students, 33 having adaptations in that particular classroom. I don't think anyone that's not involved in the school system realizes the amount of work - assessing, evaluating, recording, and data input

that's required for that number of students on adaptations. Of course, that's a huge number, and there are other students that fall into a lot of other categories that I may get a chance to mention as my hour goes on.

A class of 78 Grade 6 students, 33 on adaptations; another, a class of 68 Grade 7 students, 38 having adaptations, so we have witnessed a significant increase of students entering school with a variety of learning challenges. These students need help to succeed. These students require individual programs and these IPP programs.

I was talking to one particular teacher several weeks ago with a class of 30 - 11 IPPs in the class, a few on adaptations, and two very disruptive behavioural students. They have to develop an individual IPP program for each one of those students. You can't just take one and say that will cover them all, so there's a tremendous amount of work. To do this, you have to develop it with the resource room; you have to meet with the parents, and they have to okay it; you have to meet their outcomes; and we have so many students in our school now that are moving on from one grade to the next.

But it's watered down, there's no question about it. It's watered down because they can't meet the outcomes. In order to do that, we have to come up with these individual programs. Again, I'll have an opportunity to say a few more words concerning that as time goes on.

Too many teachers do not have nearly enough time to do the planning, preparation, marking, data entry, reporting - things that actually do not involve teaching. During the past five years, too many initiatives were dropped on the desks of teachers. In fact, if we can do anything, let's put a freeze on initiatives coming down from the top to the bottom. That in itself is a problem, coming from the top down to the bottom. Too many times teachers arrive in late August to prepare to start school in September and there are new initiatives, there are new requirements, and they're mandatory. Often they're not trained for it, and PD days are not available to take care of it.

My colleague earlier mentioned about coding. Coding is a wonderful thing if it works, but the problem is that a lot of schools have technology that is not current. A lot of teachers can spend a lot of time that's teaching time, wasted by trying to boot up these machines to get to the point where they can teach the coding. Again, in theory it sounds great but in many schools it's not working.

Again, going back to the initiatives, it's the last five, six, seven years, Mr. Speaker, there's been a tremendous number of initiatives that are coming down from the top. I really don't know what's going on at the top because do we have people who don't have much to do so they sit around, they go to in-services somewhere or conferences and they come up with an idea and they come back and say, well, I think this is a good one, let's roll it out. So, they roll it out to the school board, down to the family of schools, to the principals of the schools, and then the principal's job is to meet with the teachers in September and say,

guess what? Here's something else we're going to put on your plate - not that they have the time to do it, but that's the reality of what's been happening.

I would personally love to see a freeze for a while and let teachers teach. These are the types of things we have to look at, Mr. Speaker, and it's probably one of the many reasons why we should hoist this. These teachers are constantly assessing and recording, creating data to be sent to our board and often this data going to our boards, nothing happens with it. New programs are started and changed before they can even make a difference.

Students no longer receive educational assistants for academic reasons, and this is very serious. I can recall back when we had teachers' assistants or educational program assistants and they were there to help struggling students, students who were falling behind, students who were having problems with language arts, students who were having problems with their math skills. Well, these students don't have the luxury of having an educational assistant any longer in our school systems. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Well, if a school is lucky enough to have one, two, or three EPAs - education program assistants - they are tied to students that perhaps are a flight risk, students who are a safety risk, not only to others but to themselves. These education assistants are tied to them, as opposed to what it used to be like a few years ago.

Why waste any money on another committee, Mr. Speaker, another study, another report? We certainly don't need this here. Again, like I said earlier, let's roll up the sleeves. We know what the problems are, the teachers know what the solutions are so let's get to work - and if you don't, you should. The classroom teachers certainly will be there to help us along with the solutions and with the answers.

Mr. Speaker, it's time we stopped having large classes with education program assistants support for the three to six high-needs students. These students need intervention before, during, and after any activity and during all transitions. Again, we can't use these EPAs to divert off for part of the day, part of a class, part of the afternoon, because they have to give direct attention to the person they are responsible for, due to a lot of different reasons.

Again, principals and teachers are actually crying for education program assistants. Unless you have a student with significant medical needs, Mr. Speaker, severe mobility, perhaps toilet training or someone with consistent seizures, you are not going to get an EPA. If you request an EPA for someone again, like I said earlier, who is struggling in their school work, in their reading, in their mathematics - and I can attest to that because I can remember going to the family of schools' supervisor and saying we have to have more education assistants in our school, we have students falling through the cracks and the teachers can't meet their needs because of all the other challenges in the classroom.

The student with serious academic and behavioural needs who is always disrupting the teaching and learning in the class, unable to do the tasks, there's no EPA to help the teacher in that particular classroom.

Again, the environment in the classroom certainly has changed dramatically over the past number of years. A legislated contract will have no relevance with regard to improving the learning environment of students, and that's a further reason why we should consider a hoist. In other words, intentionally trying to shape the public's understanding or perception of the fact that everything in our education system is fine.

I think after what we've heard in Law Amendments Committee and in the emails that MLAs have received, we know that our system is not working. Schools desperately need additional guidance counsellors, psychologists, EPAs, and teachers to deal with students' inability to deal with the stressors in their lives. If there's anything common in our school system today, it's the fact that today's students are having a very difficult time coping with any stress. Too many students arriving at school in Primary to Grade 12 are suffering from anxiety and depression. If we had data for the number of high school students taking anti-anxiety medication, we would probably be shocked. Perhaps instead of prescribing medicine, we should be teaching them at an early age to develop healthy coping skills. It appears that many students are ill-equipped to deal with any type of adversity.

Problems increase at certain times of the year, for example, examination time, or maybe major assignments, but I'll stick with the examination season. As a teacher or administrator or guidance counsellor, you are guaranteed to receive several calls around that time of year where it's common for a student to arrive with a doctor's note because they're having panic attacks, or they're having anxiety about their exam. They have a doctor's note to excuse them from the exam or that particular assignment. What happens there is, often teachers have to make special arrangements to accommodate them. It could be they don't write. It could be they write in a room all by themselves. It could be they go one-on-one, perhaps with a guidance counsellor, or they have someone reading and explaining the questions to them. There are all kinds of adaptations that are required.

Again, it boils down to the fact that a lot of them are having a difficult time coping and dealing with these stressors. Today's schools are not equipped to deal with the challenges of today's students.

Most students today are very different from the ones I taught during my career. However, going into my later years, I could see the change coming. You could see these things starting to happen, and they increased rapidly since then. Gradually, we created a society of instant gratification. Several students in our school system shy away from accountability such as passing in assignments, getting to class on time, deadlines, being respectful, expecting a high average for little input. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, a school

system where they're not passing in assignments on time, where they're arriving at school late, or not arriving at school - absenteeism?

Again, I mentioned PowerSchool. It's a good program. It's a good computer program. Every classroom teacher is responsible for putting attendance in for their course. Every time students come into class, that information is immediately sent into the program. If a guidance counsellor wants to find a student in a school of 1,000, they can find out with the press of a button what class they are in, who the teacher is, and so on.

However, the flaw in this particular program with regard to loss of teaching time is, I have a class of 30 students coming to me for my Grade 11 physics course, and 25 of them arrive on time, but over the next five or six minutes, five of them straggle in. I have to stop my teaching and go to the computer and put John Doe's name in. I go back to my teaching again and two more roll in, so I have to stop and put it in. Why do I have to? Why can't I wait until the end? Because it's mandatory to get it in on time so that information is in PowerSchool and the administration knows where the students are if they want to check on them, and student services knows where they are. Of course, this information just slides right through to the board.

Again, there are so many things taking the time of the teachers' responsibilities in the classroom, and many of these have to be addressed. As I said earlier, students' needs are certainly different today than they were five, 10, or 15 years ago. If students cannot reach their outcomes, the teacher is forced to water down the outcome so that the student can meet their needs. In other words, he shouldn't fail them.

You've heard many speakers talk about the no-fail policy, Mr. Speaker, and I don't care if it's written or unwritten or whatever, but over the last number of years, any school I went into, that was their policy: we can't fail anyone. If a student makes 40 per cent in a course, the teacher had better become creative. Call it what you like - credit recovery or whatever other term you want to use - you'd better find a way for that student to reach a passing mark of 50 per cent. Otherwise you'll hear from the parent. The parent will phone the administrator, the administrator will then speak to the teacher, and the circle continues.

The expectations of students today are so different from the last number of years. They want to succeed with minimal effort because they know the pressure is in place on the backs of teachers and that it's their job to make sure every student is successful. I would say that for teachers to make sure every student is successful in the classrooms of the day is impossible. I don't think they can do it, Mr. Speaker.

Fortunately, we still have many students who are highly motivated - excellent students. They see the flaws in the system. They see the erosion of expectations, but they are determined to pay their dues and receive a good education.

We have an increase in students entering our school system who require additional help, and as the years go on, there seem to be more and more of these types of students who are not ready for school. They haven't built up the skills. They're not mature enough. That places a strain on our schools, because they already lack the necessary resources. Schools lack mental health support. They're lacking in a lot of areas: language support, counselling support, psychological support. Again, all schools are suffering in these areas, and all schools need these support systems because of the types of students we have now.

So why did the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development decide to stop allowing students to experience failure in the early grades? Perhaps out of fear of hurting their self-esteem. Many students move along and in later years have a very difficult time coping with failure. They never had to deal with it, Mr. Speaker. Teachers were expected to prop them up and make things right for them.

That is why teachers have reached a boiling point. They've kept their opinions and views to themselves for far too long. They know the system has become unsustainable. Again, if anything happened over the last few months, it is the fact that their voices are finally being heard. They have been quiet for too long, and it's time that we listen and make the necessary changes to improve the environment in our classrooms. Mr. Speaker, teachers have quietly requested the powers that be for the help during the past several years, but to no avail. Teachers knew the system was crumbling, that the wall was coming down and they could no longer bear the weight.

To give you an example - picture a mechanic in a mechanic shop, auto shop, and he/she has a car to work on and they have to remove the water pump in the car and the carburetor and he/she is given one tool to do that, and, again, we know what type of job that auto mechanic is going to do, so likewise in the classroom because of the many, many challenges and diverse learning needs. It's very difficult to reach their needs and reach the outcomes that are required.

So, our students need help, and in order for that to happen we have to make sure the supports are available for our teachers, because in our school system today we have five-, six-, seven-year-olds cursing at teachers, cursing at students. How do we address this? I know how we would address it back many years ago, but you can't do that today. So, I don't say we go back to those days, but there's something missing, there's something broken.

Services for mental health – again, absolutely inadequate in our schools and, like I mentioned earlier, the schools are crying for additional help for mental health issues in our schools and that includes elementary, middle school, and high school. So, more teachers in school, more resource teachers. Can't manage students and teach all children who behave and learn, so as a result a lot of different students are suffering. Many teachers have disruptive students, and there are certainly not enough human resources to work with them.

Classes are too large in some cases. One thing for sure is classes in many, many cases are too complicated. So, you need the tools to address these challenges.

So, basically, it's pay now or pay later. If we think the additional costs later will be more, they certainly will. So, we need productive students for our workforce, and in order to acquire that we have to put the supports in our schools to make that happen.

We have so many different types of students in our schools. We have students who don't work hard at school; we have students who show up periodically in our schools; and we have immigrant students who need extra attention because of the language, because of the culture change, and some of them are not getting the attention that they deserve because we don't have the supports there for them.

We have parents who are saying to kids you don't have to go to school. We have students who don't pay attention to deadlines anymore. What can a teacher do if someone is not meeting a deadline? They can't do anything. They have to accept the fact. So, again, we have to bring back a lot of accountability in our school system because we have students who are not passing in assignments. I mean, just imagine, students do not have to pass things in on time. It's the end of the semester and, all of a sudden, the parent finds that a student may be failing who doesn't have that passing mark. Basically, the students are telling the teachers that you can't make me do this - you know, there's an assignment due for Monday, big deal, I'm not doing it, you can't give me a zero for it.

Then, all of a sudden, it's very common to have a school board member calling the school, intervening for a parent because little Johnny is not performing and not passing. So again, Mr. Speaker, we need accountability and we need it now, because when students go to work, as you well know, they will face reality because at work, or at university for that matter, things are very, very different - you have to be accountable or you pay the price.

Think of school days when you went to school. There was accountability and you did your work and you met expectations. If you didn't, you didn't pass - that was the bottom line. So you really worked hard and help was available.

Again, parents have become very complacent with students' attendance over the last number of years - over the last 10 years, very complacent, just like they really don't care, it's not important if the son or daughter gets to school on a Monday or Tuesday or a Thursday or Friday. It's just like it's not important anymore.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we know that 400 had signed up to speak at the Law Amendments Committee. A lot of presenters didn't have their calls returned, which was unfortunate, and at eight o'clock that evening, when it was over, our amendment to make it longer and even go into the next day was defeated. Certainly we could have filled a couple more days with teachers and parents and so on coming in to tell us what the realities of the classrooms are like.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we have kids crying for help; they are dealing with bullies every day in their classes. There are teachers with such a wide variety of students in their class, children who are non-verbal, and we have our speech language pathologists, but they are just spread too thin, we don't have enough of them for a start. They are really spread thin, because there are too many schools and there are too many cases in the schools.

In one particular case, I can remember a parent speaking about her child. The child did have an EPA to look after them, one-on-one. This went on for quite some time and then, all of a sudden, they started to wean this particular child from the EPA. The reason why was because there are so many needs, Mr. Speaker, that they had to add more students to the caseload of this EPA. The daughter had many problems dealing with the language, being non-verbal the daughter couldn't be left unsupervised, there was a high risk to leave the school. On one occasion she did; in fact she left one day from the school and arrived on the doorstep of her mother's place - she happened to open the door to go out and there was the daughter.

Again, these are so many reasons why we have to hoist this particular bill and look at the whole system from the bottom right to the top. I think by hoisting it we can look at all these things and decide what areas we should attack first and prioritize the needs. Of course by hoisting it, it will give us a chance to talk to the experts, and of course the experts are the classroom teachers in our system, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this particular person ended up being taken out of the regular school system and put into a private school where they did have the appropriate specialist that could look after her, so it turned out to be a good story but reflects the fact that our schools don't have that type of support, unfortunately. Again, that type of support is needed so badly.

Mr. Speaker, the department announced a panel to examine the state of education. We know the teachers have been without a contract for a couple of years. Back in October 2014, the government released the Freeman report, and you must admit, there was a lot of thumping on desks and chests about this particular Freeman report, because all we heard during the next year from the minister is that it was the most comprehensive examination of the province's school system in 25 years, that we have listened to teachers and we know what their problems are. Well, we don't, and that's why this bill should be hoisted, so that we can have a look at these areas. Again, an action report was released. For a few moments, teachers finally felt someone was listening. Well, they were shortchanged; all their suggestions fell on deaf ears.

Bill No. 75 doesn't do a thing to improve classroom conditions, especially immediately, and again another reason why we should hoist this particular bill.

Teachers were actually looking forward to September 2016, with this new action plan; however, nothing changed and nothing was implemented. So, where is the Freeman report? What shelf is it on? All significant ills in the education system are tied up in very

long phase-ins; in other words, nothing is being done. Teachers continue to be frustrated, and feelings continue that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development doesn't care. Day-to-day life is tough in the classroom. Teachers are being kicked, punched, and verbally abused, and these types of students are right back in the classroom that very same day, that same morning, that same afternoon, with no repercussions because that's the way things are now. All the accountability is placed on the shoulders of the teachers.

The teachers are dealing with numerous situations, and at the same time, if we can hoist this bill and put it ahead on the basis of the fact that all these things are happening in our school system, the students' environment - that's the teachers' working environment, so of course that's the students' learning environment - and we can't lose sight of the students' learning environment.

There's all kinds of other examples. Courts will often order a student back to school. I can remember some cases where that has happened, a young individual in trouble with the law was sent back to school by a court order and again, all of a sudden, a safety threat to students in the classroom perhaps. Then, the school doesn't have the means to protect, to intervene - to protect other students from potential problems that occur by a student of that disruptive behaviour. So, teachers are again expected to document in detail everything that's happening, including actions that were taken; again, that's time often taken away from learning.

If an incident occurs in the classroom, there are many, many things that have to happen. So, if we hoist this particular bill, put it down the road several months, I think that we would have the ability do a really good job and tackle the things that have to be tackled in a prioritized list.

Education program assistants primarily only service students with severe issues like ones that perhaps are a flight risk, they leave school without permission, they present a danger to themselves, and again, EPAs are attached to them. Otherwise, many other students who could use an EPA just do not receive one.

There are students with intellectual disabilities in classes of over 35 students, and these students don't have any extra support. That makes it very, very difficult for the teachers to meet the needs of these students and to help them move on and progress. Some of these students are multiple grade levels behind, and they sit amongst their peers and work independently on worksheets all day. This is happening because the teacher can't meet the needs of all these diverse intellectual ability pockets in the classroom. You have some students working on sheets all day long because they do not have that extra assistance and help in the classrooms, such as educational program assistants, and so on. Teachers try to check in on them as much as possible, but they simply don't have the time to give them the attention that they need and deserve due to the class size and class configuration.

Many students are on IPPs, and many students are on adaptations. Those on IPPs have their own outcomes to meet, and they are completely different outcomes than the outcomes being covered in the class. You have outcomes for students on IPPs, you have outcomes for students who are on adaptations, you have outcomes for behaviourally disruptive students, and you have outcomes for highly motivated students who are there to learn and move on. There are so many things that we have to look at, which gives many, many reasons why we should hoist this, move it ahead, and really examine this bill.

There are cases of classes with up to nine, 10, or 11 IPP students and 14 students on adaptations. This means that one teacher must teach one lesson to the class adapted for students on adaptations, and then they must teach nine other separate lessons to the students on IPPs or the number of IPP students in the class. If someone could explain to me how one teacher can pull off teaching 10 different lessons at one time, I would appreciate them sharing this with me because I haven't met anyone who can do this where all students are learning. It can't be done, Mr. Speaker. It's just not possible.

There are students with special needs who sit in classrooms, and in some situations they do a lot of things, for example, scream or bash their head against a desk or a door. Again, these students deserve better. The inclusion program is broken. It was never intended to run the way it is now. As mentioned earlier when I was talking, the reason why it's not running correctly, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when this model was created and presented to the schools as mandatory for the school to have it, and the supports would be coming for it - materials, human resources, speech-language pathologists, and school psychologists - that part was missing. That's why we should hoist this bill, to look at those areas and get those supports in the school to help our kids who need this assistance.

Funding has been cut so much that students with severe disabilities sit in extremely large classrooms with sometimes little or no support. This is not fair to these students, it's not fair to other students in the classroom, and it's not fair to the teacher responsible for educating the students in the class. There's a lot of things we need, Mr. Speaker. We need educational program assistants, and we need them now.

There's a sign that could probably be placed on all classroom doors in our system. I think every teacher should place this sign on their door. This sign would state something like: Notice to all students; leave the excuses at the door. If you didn't do your homework, just admit it; if you didn't understand the assignment, ask for help; if you didn't study for the test, accept the grade mark and resolve to do better with help if necessary next time. If you refuse to follow my rules and directions, accept the consequences. This is not a democracy; this is my classroom and I'm here for one reason and one reason only - to teach you, to inspire you, to help you grow. I'll do my part; the rest is up for you. Again, that is what's missing, Mr. Speaker, in our classrooms today, the responsibility of the student, the accountability of the student. And, again, if we can hoist this, look at these things, I'm sure we can move forward in a very positive manner.

Again, there are many classes in Nova Scotia where the students have to evacuate the rooms. Why would they do that? Sometimes it happens a number of times during the week. This happens when a volatile student in the room has made the environment unsafe for other students, and sometimes they force a lockdown in the schools to protect and make it safe for the rest of the students, and they take this particular person to an alternate location. It could be another staff member, it could be administrative, it could be someone from student services. Again, that is tying up people who should be out there doing a lot of other things. Again, it's relatively common to have a student having a temper tantrum throwing a computer or a chair, or a student trying to harm themselves or someone else in the room. So, this certainly isn't fair for all our students.

Practically every day in our province we have teachers who are hit, spit on, kicked, punched, or have things thrown at them. The part that I have difficulty dealing with is there are often no consequences for these students, and I think that's where the system has gone wrong. There have to be consequences or there has to be responsibility; there has to be accountability, and why that sort of slipped out through the door when we were not looking I don't know. But you can see, hopefully, now why the bill should be hoisted because of the fact that we have a lot of work to do, and we can't do all of it at once, but we can certainly start and pick the things that are crucial to get the system to coming back towards the middle, because it fell right off the charts.

Because of all these things that happen in our classrooms, teachers are forced to accept these students back, right back in their classrooms with, again, no consequences dealing with their inappropriate action. So, can you imagine the stress of a teacher in the classroom dealing with this day in and day out where it's very difficult to do anything with these students who are extremely behaviourally disruptive and are doing these types of things?

Teachers are required to document everything and anything that happens in the classroom, every phone call, every mark, every outcome, every behaviour problem, every intervention, every adaptation, every strategy, every recommendation, every assessment, every strength, every weakness, all medical information, all testing results, and the list goes on and on and on.

So, can you imagine the data input that they're required to do? This takes an incredible amount of time away from their students. It impacts how teachers teach; how they plan lessons; and, most importantly, it takes away from the conversations that teachers have with their students. And we've reached a point where sometimes it's difficult for teachers to really get to know their students in a classroom because they're constantly putting out fires, and they're constantly spending some time with a pocket of students here, another pocket of students there, and before you know it, the class is over and the students are leaving and they're gone on to someone else. So, again, I think we have to have a serious look at this data collection, this data input, Mr. Speaker, and by hoisting this bill and moving forward, I think that's one of the things we can certainly look at.

Most resource teachers don't start working with students in September. They are required to update programming information on each student in TIENET, and of course, TIENET is an online program that houses all students' programming information. So, the resource personnel sometimes are not available until October or November because they're doing all this work.

Your speech-language pathologists, your school psychologists, your English as an additional language teachers that are looking after severe learning disabilities in students and so on, they are totally bogged down with assessments and data entry. In many, many schools we have guidance counsellors that are responsible for a tremendous amount of students. It's not unheard of to have a guidance counsellor responsible for 800 to 1,000 students in a building. There's no way in this world that they can service that number of students because in that number of students there's a considerable number of problems that need special, individual attention.

Many experts believe that our youth are facing a mental health crisis. Our children simply do not know how to handle conflict or how to solve their own problems. One of the things moving forward as far as hoisting this bill would be let's look at the attendance policy that we have in our schools, because really there's no attendance policy, there's nothing there with any teeth in it. If a student in all grade levels now - because it's permeated down through the middle and the elementary schools - but I think that some high school students miss a lot of classes, and there's no teeth in the policy where you can do anything about it.

I can recall one time where if they didn't reach a certain attendance level in a course they didn't get credit for it. Again, we seriously have to look at something like this here; another good reason why we should hoist this bill to give us that opportunity to fix that part of the school system. The students can miss as much time as they like. In fact, they can not attend one day all year, and teachers are still forced to move them on - unheard of.

So, school staff are required to prove and document that they have done everything in their power to get the student to attend. Guidance counsellors and student-support teachers do home visits, make many phone calls home, set up meetings with parents, write letters home, and it goes on and on and on. The school is required to do that, that's what the school does, but in many cases it doesn't help, it doesn't work. However, all these things that are happening, which take a tremendous amount of time, are all documented; they must be documented at the school because the school can be held accountable if they don't. They are responsible for the student not attending. I may have mentioned in this House before where there have been two or three students that I used to go to their homes and actually get them out of bed, wake them up with the help of their parent, and get them to school because their parent couldn't do it.

So, it is now completely acceptable for students to pass assignments in months late. Can you imagine? You're a Grade 10 biology teacher and there are assignments due; you're

trying to get your marks in; you're in a semester school; and you're trying to get your marks in. You have an assignment early January because exams come up late January; you've got to have your marks in at the end of the month because you're starting a brand new second semester, and you have several students in your class who didn't pass assignments in and there's nothing you can really do. You have to wait, you have to accommodate them. You have to come up with a mark somehow, but you can't be punitive, you can't give them zero for that assignment. Teachers are forced to assess these assignments if they do come in, and they are not permitted to take any points off for an assignment coming in late.

When it's time for teachers to make a test, they have to make multiple tests to accommodate the needs in the class. This could mean making six or seven different tests to cover the same set of outcomes in just a single classroom, Mr. Speaker. During the test, many students need adaptations - some may need to be in an alternate space, in an office, resource room or with the guidance counsellor. Other students need scribes as part of their adaptations, and some are permitted to use their notes while others use technology during these tests.

The no-fail policy has made it so that there are no natural consequences for lack of effort or for choosing to openly disobey a teacher by consistently not completing assignments.

I have mentioned a lot of different things, and again my time is running out and I could certainly go on for another hour if you'll let me, Mr. Speaker, please, okay? I'd love to because I've just touched the icing on the cake. There are so many reasons why we should hoist this bill, and I've only mentioned a few of them. Our school system today is so different from even 10 or 12 years ago. I don't know what happened the last five, six, seven years ago with the types of students that we have coming in and the lack of accountability, students in IPP, students needing special help.

And with that ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DUNN: ... I want to thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham, on the hoist motion to defer for six months on Bill No. 75.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak in favour of the motion to delay this process, to take a time out. I've already spoken in this House about the need to take some time for the two principal parties affected by this legislation,

the Nova Scotia Government and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, to have a chance to repair their relationships.

The reason why I think that is so important is because of who the parties here represent. It is very difficult, and it will be very difficult to start to work on addressing the many issues that have come out over the past four months. It started 15 months ago, but really the stories from teachers have just poured out - and from parents and in some cases from students as well. Those stories have really poured out, and they are so heartfelt, and they are stories of people who are struggling to be their best selves in an education system that does seem to be, in many ways, broken. So, I'm concerned about how we respond to those stories when the relationship between the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the Government of Nova Scotia is very much wounded as a result of this bargaining process, and that is why I am in favour of the hoist.

I like metaphors. We've had some amazing metaphors come out that are very clear and that I think I will remember forever; some of them at Law Amendments. One teacher likened the education system in Nova Scotia to an assembly line where someone is operating the assembly line and constantly cranking up the speed, and also adding new buckets of bolts and nuts that must be put on the pieces as they're passing by so that literally the person at the assembly line just can't keep up. I think we could consider one of the bucket of bolts might be PowerSchool, another bucket of bolts might be TIENET. But that's a metaphor, and you know we have the picture of an assembly line. I think it's just a very clear picture of how much people are struggling - like, they literally can't keep up.

Another teacher used the metaphor of a dinner plate where with every new initiative from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, it's like the number of items that are on the plate are too great and there's no space left. When it comes to dessert - and the dessert might be the bit of learning where it actually leads a child's eyes to light up because they're doing learning that is fun, they're doing the learning that is going to help them connect to their future - there's no room for dessert because the teacher's time is already maxed out managing the items on the plate already.

One of my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus likened our education system to hosting a Thanksgiving dinner where no one lets you know who's going to come, and some people come late and people have various food allergies and you're trying to prepare actually for five different meals for a group of people.

These are all different metaphors, but for me the emotion behind them is a sense that the government is being fundamentally inconsiderate to teachers who are working as hard as they can and, in some cases, actually working harder than is physically or emotionally healthy for them. Which is why the work-to-rule has been an interesting and for many people I think an elucidating process recognizing, okay, like maybe I can't absolutely fix this impossible situation by just going ever harder, ever faster, and sacrificing

ever more of my family time and my personal time and my personal health to try to make this work.

So, what might happen during six months if this legislation were delayed for six months? What could happen that would be productive in that time? I've mentioned before the models that come from restorative justice in which Nova Scotia is a real leader, and something that I learned in my community work in the north end of Halifax over the past five years before I was elected is that restorative justice is just one application of restorative processes. You can have a restorative process in education; you can have a restorative process in any number of different contexts where you have a dispute between parties that many different people are involved. I think that really actually describes pretty accurately the situation with our education system.

I want to thank here, in particular for inspiration, the leadership at St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary school which is a wonderful community school in the north end of Halifax - a very high enrolment, French immersion, right in the middle of what is a transforming neighbourhood: a lot of families who come from public housing; a lot of families who come from the Hydrostone; and a new, fancy condo building going up right next door. They work with restorative processes in the school, and sometimes that means working very closely with parents to help parents come into the conversation and understand their role in supporting their teacher, and also recognizing in some cases when parents have actually had negative experiences in the education system themselves which has left them less able to work with their children towards positive educational outcomes.

In that school they work very hard to always keep children in school and to meet the children's needs in the school. I just think it's inspiring to see a school like that which is actually really committing to leadership, to innovation, to initiatives that really nurture the whole child, and in so many ways they're doing it despite the many pressures put on them by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. And I want to give a particular shout out to Amy Hunt who is the vice-principal of the school and is currently working on her Ph.D. on restorative processes in the education system.

If a restorative process were to happen in the next six months, who are the different parties and what are the conversations that would need to happen to try to meet some of their needs so that a more positive and long-lasting resolution to the current moment could be arrived at? Obviously teachers are the group, the 9,300 of them who have been trying to keep our education system going, keep educating our children, keep meeting the demands and the edicts and the deadlines placed on them by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, keep feeding PowerSchool, keep producing these ridiculous report cards that take an incredible amount of time and tell us so little about our children - they are the ones.

The other day, last week, after our last day here together - I think it was Friday, I can't remember the exact time - I actually ended up getting the bus home to the north end,

and a woman I know from my neighbourhood who is a teacher got on and we sat together as we took the No. 7 home. She, of course, had been here protesting. She talked about her experience. She's at the very beginning of her teaching career. She has two young children, her daughter and my daughter go to school together, and then she has a little one who is not yet in the school system.

She talked about how much time she has spent away from her family in the past few years. She described her experience of last year, which was her first year at her new school, as incredibly stressful. What I found so telling was she said, not the students, not the classroom, not the teaching, it was all the other stuff - someone saying have you signed this form? Have you filled out this report? Have you met this deadline? She said, I didn't even know what they were talking about. She hasn't been around long enough to understand what the rationale is or to necessarily have gotten the professional development that would have come when some initiative that involves some piece of data collection and some piece of accountability and reporting was rolled out by the department.

I found it heartening in some ways because after some of the stories we've heard about classrooms, I thought that surely it's the classroom that she finds impossible to manage well. But no, she's teaching little kids and she loves teaching little kids; it's what she went to school for, it's what she's gifted at. It wasn't the work in the classroom with the students that she was struggling with, it was everything else and the fact that everything else actually crowds the heart of the work.

In correspondence with various teachers they are so aware of how much money we have invested in PowerSchool. I'm actually going to spend some time crunching the numbers to figure out exactly how much money we have spent on PowerSchool. I was able to pull up a report from the Auditor General - and I can table that - which just looks at the implementation phase of PowerSchool, and the total from 2009 to 2013 was \$12.491 million.

Of course we're continuing to spend year in and year out on administering that system, generating reports from it, controlling and ensuring that all the very private data in it is kept safeguarded. Much of that money flows to an international corporation based in the United States that provides that software to many schools and many school systems internationally. To create another metaphor, my sense of PowerSchool, never having actually tried to operate it, is that it's as if we've invested in an air traffic - as if you need to be an air traffic controller to operate it, or as if we've bought a battleship to get between Halifax and Dartmouth. Is it actually the right size for the system we're trying to administer?

Again, from reading some of the reports from the Auditor General going back to when it was brought in, I recognize that across the province we had various boards using various software systems to keep track of their data. That was deemed a problem because you couldn't collect any data. Well, I think there's some debate about whether or not that's

a problem; we already were doing national and international assessments. Did we actually need to invest that money so we could also gather and do comparable data analysis on a Nova Scotia level? I would say that at this point, having heard what I've heard from the Law Amendments Committee, I'm not entirely convinced.

But certainly that \$12.6 million is sunk-cost at this point, and maybe if we listen to teachers we could address some of the issues by simply turning off some of the systems within the system - choosing not to have every drop-down menu, operating a streamlined PowerSchool. I have to say, because I have this metaphor in my head of operating a battleship to get from Halifax to Dartmouth, the danger is that, having invested so much in that technology, you feel like you want to use it all, and all of a sudden we have missiles firing off over the Macdonald Bridge.

I'm not sure how it would work to try to do a trimmed-down PowerSchool, but we're certainly getting a clear sense from teachers that it is a problem.

What else might teachers want to have addressed, or what else might they want to talk about if we were to engage in a restorative process? How about the Freeman report and the promises and the urgent action items that were identified there, which haven't really been talked about?

I really do think that, as angry and insulted as many teachers are, there are also many teachers who want to engage in some sort of restorative process with this government. They want to have us reach a conclusion to the last 15 months that is healthy for the system, that is healthy for them, that takes all the energy and all the stories that have been churned up through this and take it somewhere productive.

As I'm sure many of you have, we've received some Law Amendments Committee submissions that weren't actually heard. One that I received was specifically about problem solving and conflict resolution. It's from a Primary teacher, Kimball Flynn. I don't know if Kimball is a male or a female name, but this teacher writes, I cannot force my students to say yes to something. All I can do is present proposals where they believe it is in their best interest to say yes, and for me, it could be a simple negotiation of putting snow pants on before they go outside.

What the government has failed to do is put something before teachers where it is in their best interest to say yes. Kimball also writes, In my opinion, negotiations and problem solving are productive as long as they are not looked upon as a winner-takes-all battle. However, I need to remind myself that if I view negotiations as a battle, then I already have a problem.

Right now, the Premier and the Education Minister have a problem because the culmination of what we anticipate will happen today, which is the passing of Bill No. 75, will be a solution for the winner. It will resolve this contract dispute. It will impose a

contract. But there still hasn't been anything presented to teachers which they feel it is in their best interest to say yes to.

Finally, Kimball writes that the parties - the Premier, the Education Minister, and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union - have forgotten to look at negotiations as an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving. They have gone into these past negotiations as a battle, a battle where someone wins, and someone loses. Of course, it's not just a party that loses. I guess part of the point I'm making is that many of us are losing. In part, we're losing because I don't see, even with the commission to address classroom conditions, a way to truly get at and continue the conversations that have started around some of the most difficult challenges that teachers have presented. It cannot just be on teachers, and it really can't just be on the government to address those challenges.

Another teacher wrote us. This is Erin Hart Breen, who's a secondary teacher from Havre Boucher. She wrote: We the teachers and the government need to rebuild our trust in each other. The teachers have never stopped teaching, even during work-to-rule. You can trust we will continue to do the jobs we love and keep our students as our first priority. I am sure you can remember enough to realize that imposing a contract on teachers will not reinstate normalcy in the classroom. You will be showing our students and the citizens of this province that it is normal for a government to change laws to keep its citizens in line. In this terrifying global political climate, is that really what we want to see normalized?

She wrote many beautiful things, and I know that every member of the Legislature received this email. What struck me is she wrote with the goal of helping us understand the situation that she's in in the classroom. The goal was to help us to understand, not expressing anger but just saying, here, let me help you understand. That's what so many teachers have done for us as their elected representatives.

I fear that without taking the pause that the hoist motion calls for, we are in danger of not getting back to that, not continuing to give our attention where we really must give our attention, which is furthering our understanding and addressing the challenges in classrooms.

As I said last week, there is nothing more important than this. As Nova Scotians, there is nowhere more so than public education where our society is formed. We don't all meet in faith communities. Many of us don't participate in faith communities, and we each have our own. We don't all participate in the same sports. We don't all participate in the same leisure activities. We don't all live in the same communities. But as a society, we are invested together in the public education system. It is where we replicate ourselves as a society. So when teachers are letting us know how incredibly strained that is, we all have to listen.

One of my concerns is that there will be - for parents who have the option - an exodus from our public education system, and then we're not replicating ourselves as a society altogether at all. That's something I find very worrisome.

Another of the main parties at a restorative process would be the Nova Scotia Government. I do feel like this government needs to really atone for some of the language that has been used in the course of the last 15 months, particularly over the last two and a half months. Suggesting that our teachers are asking this government to make choices that would result, for example, in resources leaving the health care system - that it's either we invest in our classrooms or we address long-term care - that is a false choice. That is not fair.

It's this government's job to make choices, and they make all kinds of choices. They can also make choices to add another tax bracket for the wealthiest Nova Scotians. They can also choose to run a deficit. They can also choose to not give subsidies to banks. They can also choose to put procurement policies in place so that we are supporting local businesses and are therefore attracting young people to come to Nova Scotia and stay here and add to our tax base.

To say that the choice is, oh, those teachers, who already make a good salary, either they're going to get a little bit more or they're going to get to keep their service award - which they negotiated in lieu of having an indexed pension - or we're going to have to take something out of long-term care. That is not fair and it is not accurate.

In our long hours - and I appreciate that these are long hours for all of us, and some of us are having a struggle to speak accurately and succinctly and clearly and consistently - I was struck at the number of times, in responses to questions in Question Period, that the Premier would say "We need to get teachers back in the classroom." Teachers never left the classroom.

AN HON. MEMBER: Except on Friday.

MS. ROBERTS: Except on Friday, yes. Thank you. (Interruptions) They did leave the classroom. Of course, they did.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Halifax Needham has the floor.

MS. ROBERTS: Restorative processes - whether it's injustice or when there's been a crime committed, there are various people who are hurt. There are various people who have a stake in the game.

I happen to be part of one group that has a pretty major stake in the game. I'm a parent. Parents have a pretty major stake in the game, and yes, I would like there to be a

process where there are representatives of parents there, because again, I feel like my confidence is shaken. I will not forget the stories that teachers have told, and I also think teachers will not stop telling those stories. Now that they've started being honest, and now that they've stopped wearing the shortcomings of the education system as personal failures for which they must somehow, through superhuman effort, make up for, I think we're going to continue to hear about how our children are not getting what they need in classrooms.

So, my confidence is shaken, not in teachers but in the system and in the ability of the system to give my own children what they need, and I can say that that's a very new experience for me. I think part of the reason why it is a new experience for me is because I have these really awesome kids. I mean, my son's teacher last year said Ben est l'étudiant parfait - Ben is the perfect student. He is just the sweetest little boy who is very self-contained and can really take care of himself and never, never uses up too many resources. But one thing I've realized is that that can actually mean that his needs are not being met, and because he's going to be a student who's easy for a teacher to manage, it's actually possible that in our education system as it has been described to me, he may not get what he needs and because he's not a behaviour problem, that may not come to my attention. I have to pay more attention, I realize out of this.

One parent wrote to us, and I will table this as well, about how her daughter has been failed by our education system throughout her entire school career. It finally did get to the point that the school and the system were able to help her daughter attend a private school for four years, a private school that does specialize in helping children with special needs to have those needs met. Then, after four years, the subsidy was no longer available, and her daughter had to return to the mainstream school system. Her daughter's needs are again not being met.

This mom, Audrey McGowan, who also had asked to speak at the Law Amendments Committee but wasn't able to, describes this and how she was "... a single mother and could barely afford to feed my kids let alone pay \$12,500 a year to pay for the school my daughter was thriving in. So, while teachers scramble to get what supports they could into place to prepare for my daughter to be reintroduced to the public school system ...", speaking to the government, "... you were still doing studies on how to help her."

You know, we have members here in the House who have kids who are in high school, we have members here in the House who have babies and young children who are not yet in the school system, and I've got my kids in the very early years of the system. I think anyone who's a parent realizes that it goes fast, and right now it appears to me that our response to some very urgent calls for help and change and support to our education system, our response is slow. It will be too slow for some children who are in the system right now; it already has been too slow for some children who are in the system.

I guess it begs me to plead with the government that they consider taking a six-month pause because we're doing this in haste, which is not actually going to help the

response happen. We're moving in haste in the wrong places and moving slowly in the right ones. How does that make sense? I think parents would also need to be part of a conversation around this dispute because of various other parts that we play.

It was interesting to see my colleague, the member for Sackville-Cobequid, have a light go on around PowerSchool and GradeBook, and he thought it was so great that he could go onto the system and check his children's grades in high school the moment that they are put into the system. Then listening to teachers testify at the Law Amendments Committee, he realized how much that has changed the conversations between students and their teachers. So much of the conversation has ended up being around the grade immediately, and why didn't I get those two points in such and such - you put this grade in but that's not the grade that you gave me on my paper and now I'm having an anxiety attack about that.

Even how it has changed the conversations in some cases between parents and children where instead of the conversation being, so what did you learn today, or how is that assignment going, or what do you think you learned out of making that presentation, or how did you feel about that, instead they have constant input which is all about the numbers, it's all about the grades, which in the best of worlds don't perfectly reflect learning, and they certainly don't help you deepen your learning by reflecting on what you have learned.

I think parents also have to own our part in maybe jumping onto that bandwagon of accountability and wanting constant communication and so forth. I think we really need to support our teachers when they say we maybe have gone too far. Frankly, part of what is happening in the school system, which is much deeper and reflects changes in our society in general, is the amount of time that children are spending on screens, the amount of time that children are spending outdoors, the amount of time that children are allowed to spend being bored, and the amount of time that parents are able to spend with their children, actively parenting.

Now we have GradeBook, which is another ping on the phone. I hadn't realized that until one of the presenters at the Law Amendments Committee last week - you get a ping on your phone when a grade gets put into PowerSchool. What do students have too much of? Pings on their phones - they don't have enough real face-to-face conversations.

All of us can. I fall into it as a politician now with more followers on Twitter and so forth. I can get sucked into chasing the pings on my phone. That is not helping me to do my job as a legislator. It's nice. So parents also have to own our part - and I'll table that presentation that almost happened at the Law Amendments Committee.

Going back to the Freeman report for a moment, in its section on system infrastructure, this is how some parents wrote about PowerSchool - PowerSchool allows me, as a parent, to stay on top of my children's progress and provide some help as soon as

possible when they may struggle with course work, and the access to information has improved significantly with the implementation of PowerSchool. This allows parents to closely monitor their child's progress and attendance. Most teachers are using it consistently and this is far more helpful than a report card twice a year. There is an upside, I guess, to PowerSchool.

One of the criticisms I heard, not so much specifically of the Freeman report but of the minister's Action Plan for Education is that because the survey was so broad-based and, frankly, because parents are not in classrooms, it's easy for us to say yes, this is great, to something that is actually making our teachers lives and jobs more challenging. Again, I think that's a reason why it would make sense to have some sort of restorative process as part of relationship healing during six-month pause in this process.

I'm going to add grandparents to the folks who could be legitimately concerned parties around that table. My own parents, for whom my children are the primary reason that they moved to Nova Scotia from Newfoundland and Labrador - sorry, burden on the health care system and all - started feeding me information about private schools three years ago, the Maclean's report on private schools. I am in the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party for very deeply held reasons, and my children will never go to private school. Hold that up, chase it in Hansard in 10 years' time, and call me a hypocrite if you will. I hope not. My parents also have a stake in this because they're a very important support to my children and their school system.

But so do other Nova Scotia grandparents who are hoping that their children might come home to have their grandchildren here. I've already received one email from someone who has advised her brother not to come to Nova Scotia because his child would not be well supported in this education system. His child has some special needs. He's living away right now, and based on those conversations with his sister, who is an educator in the system, he's going to hold off until the kids have finished their P-12.

This story, this dispute, this opening of Pandora's box, has spread to national newspapers. It has been reported nationally. Across the country, people are going, well, housing prices are a little bit better in Halifax, oh, I would like to live on the ocean. But our education system is not up to snuff in these various ways.

I know that those national standardized tests that we focus so much on show that we're now at the national average I believe for literacy, and that's great. But clearly there are other issues in our system. As a province that wants and desperately needs to attract young families to Nova Scotia, both from within Canada and elsewhere in the world, this will have done nothing to attract new immigrants.

Another party to this restorative conversation that could and should take place over the next six months would be the top bureaucrats from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. At our Human Resources Committee meeting of January

31st, Sandra McKenzie, who is the Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, acknowledged that teachers are right, that there have been too many assessments happening in classrooms. I was looking back over the Hansard record of that committee, and I noticed that she said no preparation is needed for provincial assessments. They're just done on the day of, and then they're collected and marked elsewhere. There's a couple of things about that.

One, with a daughter whose class was assessed for one of these provincial assessments for the first time this Fall, I can tell you that there was a heck of a lot of preparation for that test, in part because my daughter, at eight years old, had never written a test before. The teachers had to spend all this time preparing children for what it means to write a test and what that looks like. That's not how eight-year-olds and seven-year-olds actually do learning in a classroom generally. It's sort of a foreign concept. So yes, there was preparation.

Also, I don't actually have it from Hansard, but I swear I heard at Law Amendments Committee that teachers were instructed by boards to prepare their students because boards are accountable to the department. The department is looking at the results of those assessments, and they want to see that the students are doing well, that they have captured what they're supposed to have captured, it so happens, the year before, before a long summer. That's why, in fact, yes, there was preparation happening in classrooms for Primary school students in the very first part of the year, when instead teachers should have been free to establish their classroom, establish routines, get to know their students instead of having this, really it did feel like exam stress to me - like, that's how it felt. I was getting it from the communication - to the teacher, to my daughter, to me; you know, this, felt like exam stress for my eight-year-old.

So, that just points to me to how I believe that there appears to be a disconnect, and I think some of the teachers who testified at Law Amendments spoke to that. The initiatives are so top-down, and also that the people in the department have not been in classrooms in so long that in some cases they're just like missing "aha" moments, they're missing understanding about how initiatives from the department unroll at the classroom level, and what impact that has.

It's important that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the people who are leading it under our minister have a chance to say more directly to teachers, because it was good to hear that acknowledgement that teachers are right, but I bet teachers are kind of right about a lot of stuff and they should hear that loud and clear - they should be validated instead of continuing to feel disrespected, all the way to the end of this dispute.

Another party would be the post-secondary system. I've had frequent communication with someone who works with graduates of our public school system, for the Nova Scotia Community College, talking about how students are insufficiently

prepared, talking about the effects of what is effectively a no-fail policy, talking about the results of IPPs which are maintained on students for long periods of time and then just removed so that they're able to graduate to go on to post-secondary.

Some of the issues that particularly high school teachers raise - the impact of no real deadlines, of students not facing consequences for their own effort or lack of effort - those are felt in the next system. Certainly when I was teaching for a short while at a university - I was a writing tutor - I certainly witnessed that anxiety that teachers are talking about. Having not faced consequences, having not been allowed to fail, students are completely freaked out the first time they encounter something really outside of their current ability.

I think that's a story that we've told ourselves in general as a society where we've really got it wrong. What matters is not our abilities or our knowledge in a given moment, but our mindset. Are we able and willing to work and do we have confidence that when we do work and when we do invest the time in learning that we'll be able to learn stuff? I think in a very real way, my own understanding of that has changed a lot. Look at me, I've been speaking for 45 minutes. I didn't think I could do that. This is the longest I've made it yet. (Applause)

I'm struck and surprised, myself, at what I have been able to learn, and I think our students are getting the message that I think you're good at this or you're not good at this, but frankly you're allowed to not be good at something. You can still actually work at it and learn. You can overcome and maybe even value the knowledge more highly because it wasn't easy for you to acquire. Right now, our system sends the wrong signals and just doesn't enforce that growth mindset or learning mindset that our students need to succeed at post-secondary, but also importantly to succeed in the workplace.

It is entirely within the normal realm of human experience to show up at a new job, feel intimidated, kind of screw it up, and then get better. If our students are not having the opportunity to fail and to be held accountable and to do better, how are they prepared for life? I think the post-secondary system and employers can also be in that restorative conversation about how we move forward from this moment, and I think that conversation would be very worthwhile.

Having said all that, I don't think there is any reason to pause certain next steps. While I think Bill No. 75 could be paused for six months and it would absolutely do a service to Nova Scotia and a service to our teachers and a service most importantly to our children, I think that we do urgently need to act on the items that teachers have identified as urgent. So, that means urgently investing in more classroom resources, more educational program assistants, more school psychologists, and a more reasonable ratio of speech-language pathologists. These are the investments that could and would make a real difference immediately and also show teachers that in fact as their employers we're

listening, we have their backs, we see that they're crying "mayday" and we're actually coming to help. I see no reason at all to wait for the findings of this commission.

There may be some longer-term classroom improvement initiatives that require a great deal of deliberation from those nine classroom teachers and the co-chairs, but I think we have all received messages pretty loudly and clearly about some steps that could be taken right now. I hope that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development will be realigning the priorities of the department so that what is urgent gets urgent attention because I think barring that, regardless of an imposed collective agreement, there will not be the sort of resolution that we want to this dispute. I think the government has brought in Bill No. 75 thinking that it would somehow resolve things but, really, nothing is resolved in this process.

So, thank you very much, I do support the hoist motion. I do urge the government to consider what it needs to do in haste and what it should do slowly. I want to express my view that we are currently doing in haste what we should do reluctantly and slowly, and we are doing too slowly what we should be doing in haste.

Thank you very much for your time.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JOHN LOHR: It is my privilege to speak to this motion to put the decision on Bill No. 75 off for six months, colloquially known as a hoist motion. In the world I come from, a "hoist" is a thing that lifts a piece of machinery off the ground.

A hoist motion is one that says this bill will be decided six months from now, and that - for the public who are watching - effectively gives each of the Opposition members another hour to speak. We can speak to the defects of the bill in this hoist motion, and speak again on third reading, so it is effectively a tool used by Opposition in our democracies to filibuster or to speak against a bill.

I would like to start by saying a few words against some of the statements in the "whereases." I notice that this bill, Bill No. 75, has in the preamble a "whereas" that says "the Minister and the Union have agreed to appoint a Commission to reform inclusive education . . ." Then a couple of sentences down, we have ". . . a Council to Improve Classroom Conditions . . ."

So not only do we have the Freeman report from a couple of years ago about conditions in our school system, we have a bill before us which references two different bodies - a commission to reform inclusive education and a council to improve classroom conditions. We have a bill that does not consider an extensive report from a couple of years ago - the Freeman report - but goes on to create two more bodies to look at classroom conditions.

I can tell you the message we've heard from teachers is "no more committees," but here we have two more committees in this bill. Many people may not know, but we just passed an amendment - or I think an amendment has been added to the bill; maybe it hasn't been passed yet in reference to the council to improve classroom conditions. That council, oddly enough, created a dual-chair system, and someone recognized that there was potential that the two chairmen would not agree.

Well, I would say there's potential not only that that may not happen but that the council and the commission may not agree, and the two of them may not agree with the Freeman report. We create an endless circle of councils and commissions and disputes and debates in this - maybe not, but there's certainly a strong possibility for that.

We had an amendment to Bill No. 75 come forward earlier today that appoints a process to have an arbitrator. Great. We can have an arbitrator if the two co-chairs of the council do not agree - the council that is created in Bill No. 75 - we can have arbitration. I find that may be incredibly ironic, that we're going to that when the dispute between the teachers and the government could have gone to arbitration, but in order for that to happen, both parties have to agree to that.

It's my understanding that the teachers would accept arbitration, but the government declined to have arbitration for whatever reason. Yet in the bill the government is accepting a mechanism to have arbitration between two co-chairs in this council. I would suggest that that is a logical inconsistency on the part of the government on this thing.

In the farm world, we say that you can't put lipstick on a pig and make it look any different. It's still a pig. I would say that about this bill.

Furthermore, on the concept of arbitration, in Clause 14 of the bill, this Bill No. 75, despite the fact that it's accepting arbitration for this council, in Clause 14 it says, "No arbitrator or arbitration board established under any Act of the Legislature or in accordance with a collective agreement and no board or tribunal, including the Labour Board established under the Labour Board Act, has jurisdiction to (a) determine the constitutional validity or constitutional applicability of this Act;"

So, the Act itself in Clause 14 is dismissing arbitration, despite the fact that we've just accepted an amendment for arbitration, with the two, so I would suggest that this is a logical inconsistency.

Furthermore, the second point, even more shockingly, "14(b) determine whether a right conferred, recognized, affirmed or otherwise guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada has been infringed by this Act." In other words, this bill is saying that the Act is more important and stands above the Constitution of Canada - am I reading that wrong? Really? A Constitution that 75 years ago the democracies of the world stood together and our Canadian soldiers fought totalitarianism and Fascism around the world for our

Constitution to stand but this bill is more important than that Constitution and the rights in that Act in the Constitution of Canada? Is this really what this is saying? This is as I read it straight up, this is what it's saying.

I know I heard the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development say earlier today when asked about the probability - well the certainty - that this bill will be challenged in court, that the minister believed that the bill would stand a court challenge, despite the fact that we've seen court challenges of similar bills in other provinces that have failed. Is it because we have this little Clause 14 in the bill, what is effectively a child's game in school, of dibs - I said it first so no, you can't? Really? Is this bill really more important than the Constitution of Canada. I say shame on the government on this type of statement being in this bill.

Maybe I'm reading it wrong, maybe it means something else. I'm a farmer, not a lawyer, but I'm shocked that we have accepted an amendment about appointing an arbitrator for the council but we have here written in this bill that this Act stands above the Constitution of Canada. What kind of statement is that? Does anybody really believe that, the rights and freedoms we have in the Constitution of Canada, that this Act is more important than that? I say shame on the government on Clause 14 in this bill. I don't believe it one bit and I think that it is a further point, which is a defect, a serious flaw in this bill that not only will we see this bill challenged in court, not only is it not going on a sort of fair collective bargaining process that is there, it accepts arbitration. This amendment accepts arbitration when the bill excludes it, when the bill says this bill is more important than the Constitution of Canada. Think about that.

Anyway, that in itself is a serious defect and I would say an unconstitutional clause. My suspicion is that the Constitution of Canada says something similar. My suspicion is that the Constitution of Canada probably has a line in it on rights and freedoms and says that no provincial Legislature or no Act or law made in any of the provinces can supersede the rights and freedoms in this Act. That's my suspicion, I don't have a copy of the Constitution of Canada or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but my suspicion is that the Constitution says no provincial Legislature or no one in Canada can create a law that infringes on the rights and freedoms that we have as Canadians.

Here we have a law, a bill, that is infringing on the Constitution of Canada. I would suggest that this is, in fact, an unconstitutional statement in this bill and will not stand a court challenge. If the minister is believing that this Bill No. 75 has any hope of withstanding a court challenge because Clause 14 is in it, I would suggest that I can't see it. I think it's very unfortunate that we're going this way and I think there are a lot of logical inconsistencies in accepting arbitration in part of the bill but rejecting it in another part and rejecting it when it is provided for as a mechanism. If the government is really in favour of arbitration, why did we come to this point? Why didn't we have arbitration?

MR. SPEAKER: Order. I just ask that the member refer to the rationale for the hoist in the comments that he makes, why to delay the bill.

The honourable member for Kings North has the floor.

MR. LOHR: I believe that what I'm saying as a rationale for the hoist is that the bill itself is unconstitutional. I think that's a very compelling rationale.

The bill also references a commission to reform inclusive education. We've heard quite a bit about inclusion in our classrooms. It was in October of last year that I was speaking in the House and I recall saying that I had a teacher in Kings North who said that inclusion is a delusion, certainly the way that we are operating inclusion. I've said I believe that inclusion is fundamentally driven by human resources. I heard that in the Law Amendments Committee, that it is the lack of human resources that makes it impossible to make inclusion work.

I asked myself over the weekend, what do I really believe about inclusion? I will state, as I think about it, that I do fundamentally believe in inclusion. I want to give you the reasons why. One person I heard in Law Amendments Committee speaking about inclusion said that we learn from having students with special needs in our lives, that we benefit more from that and learn more from that than they learn from us.

I was thinking of a comment that I heard made at a Special Olympics event. I heard a police officer say that the reason so many police officers were involved in Special Olympics was because the Special Olympians themselves were absolutely without guile. In other words, there was absolutely no deception. You're always getting absolute raw honesty from Special Olympians. Think about the life of a police officer, always trying to figure out if someone is telling the truth, sometimes not being sure, sometimes knowing very well that they're being lied to. To have the opportunity to work with a group of people who are absolutely without deception, as in Special Olympians, essentially the same group who would be part of inclusion - I believe it is fundamentally important that they are included in our educational system, so I want to make that statement. However, I do believe that inclusion needs to be human resourced.

I recall an email from a constituent who lived in Truro at the time when inclusion began, and the school that was there for students with special needs was shut down. At that time, it was stated that because there will be so much savings not having the separate system, there would be no problem having the resources in the system to provide for inclusion. That hasn't proven to be the case. There has been a problem providing the resources in the system to have inclusion function. Whether that promise that was made by the government of the day, whichever government that happened to be, was not met or it simply has proven to be more daunting or we have come into a more cost-conscious environment - for one reason or another, that hasn't happened.

But if I think about what I fundamentally believe about inclusion, I will tell you that in my opinion, the most important thing a student is going to learn in school is going to be to learn to read. I've had many people working on the farm who didn't know how to read - or some. It's surprising how well they can hide that when they don't know how to read, how clever some people are and how successful they can be. I think of Jacques Demers, who never learned how to read.

In my opinion, maybe that's not the right place for inclusion, in literacy and learning to read. Maybe that needs to be streamed. I believe there are many other classes where inclusion would work fine. If we think about what our educational system is teaching, the fundamentally most important thing is that each person who has the capacity or the potential to learn how to read learns how to read. That is the single most life-altering skill that a person can have.

I have had young men who just got out of school or are still in school who I could say, change the brake pads on that car or put that alternator in or rebuild this or rebuild that - no problem; didn't know how to read though. Likely, it was because - which I never had the opportunity to drill down into with them, I don't know why but when I realized they had a problem, we made adaptations for that but likely it was because of dyslexia or ADHD or some other learning disability. I believe literacy is extraordinarily important and there are places in the world that are very poor countries that have higher rates of literacy than our school system and I don't have the facts to table, I'm just going by memory.

I've heard that, and I think that we have to ask ourselves where is it appropriate, which classrooms should be appropriate, and which classrooms should not? We have to be thinking about that in a strategic way. I would suggest that English classes, literacy is just fundamentally important and should be a streamed class because of the difficulty a teacher has of teaching, which we have all heard in Law Amendments Committee of teachers saying they're teaching Grade 7, Grade 8 English and they've got a range of abilities from university level in that class to Grade 1. What happens is the level that gets taught, it's not possible for a teacher to teach that many different levels in one class at one time and we have to be honest about that.

I know that I spoke earlier about - and I'm sure he wouldn't mind, I didn't ask his permission - but my oldest son who, in Grade 5, we learned did not have the ability to read. He had been masking that very cleverly. We intervened and were able to teach him how to read. It can take a fair bit of intervention and effort but I believe that that effort and intervention is fundamentally worth it.

There are lots of adaptations that we can have. If you're not good at math there are calculators, there are very powerful point-of-sales systems if you're a store clerk, very intuitive, very easy to use. But the ability to read is something that will go with you all your life and I just believe that it should be one - pronouns, nouns, and all that stuff - which I have to confess that I don't feel that I learned that stuff all that well but I just believe that

that is something that we just have to make sure that our system teaches every student who has the potential to learn to read, to learn to read. I think that this a part where I would have to say that I don't believe that inclusion should happen in that particular class. It should be streamed.

I know that we've had some debate in this Legislature about whether there is a no-fail policy and we've asked that question of the minister. It has been one of the issues here, and the teachers of the province know that in fact there is. In fact, I would like to read from a document which I will table entitled the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board Student Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting Practices and Procedures document. Page 19 of this document says "4.4 Retention. The AVRSB and the Department of Education believe that most students in grades P-6 and most middle level/junior high students (grades 6-9) benefit from being in class with their peers in age-appropriate settings. Retention, therefore, is a rare exception."

So, it's not saying that there's an absolute no-fail policy but it is a rare exception. Furthermore, it goes on to point out, "In those rare cases where retention is viewed as an option for the student, . . . that retention will be experienced by a student no more than once during grades primary to nine."

So, in fact, there is a no-fail policy as outlined here. My suspicion is that if we were to dig a little bit we would find out that most of the other school boards have a similar thick document which outlines a similar no-fail policy. We know approximately 400 students a year in our system of approximately 100,000 students do fail.

I will say that it is not the intent of - really, nobody wants to see anybody fail. We want to see every student learn the material. It is my belief - and I would be happy to be corrected on this - that the idea that there was an idea that came into the system maybe 20 or 25 years ago that the stigma of not grading was worse than the stigma of being passed and not knowing the material - worse than the issues that arise from being passed and not knowing the material.

I believe that in the beginning of that policy, there were only a few students in that category. At that time it probably would have been true when there were maybe more resources in the classroom and students caught up. I can tell you that as I mentioned, my son in Grade 3 and Grade 4 didn't learn to read and we discovered in Grade 5 that he didn't learn to read, he had just been moved along. So, that policy was in place then. I can tell you that the stigma of getting to Grade 7 or 8 or 9 and realizing that everybody else in the class knows how to read and you don't know how to read - I believe that is more damaging than if a student had been held back a year.

I realize that it is a debatable point. The unfortunate result of the very, very reduced retention - 400 students at a very low rate of retention - is that we have a situation which has arisen now where many students are on individual program plans because they didn't

get the material in Grade 3 or 4 and they are now in Grade 7 or 8. So a teacher teaching a typical class will have a number of students on an IPP. In other words, they are 13 years old and they are with their age bracket but, in fact, they are not at a Grade 7 level, they are at a Grade 4 level. One student like that in a class, that might be manageable, but having five or six or seven students like that in a class and not having additional human resources present in that class, I would say that we're asking that teacher to do a very daunting task.

In fact, we live in a world where in almost every field we've gone the other way, and it probably all started with Henry Ford and the assembly line - very specialized work. In most fields we ask people to do a very clearly defined task, we don't ask them to do four or five things at once. In fact, that is what my colleague the member for Halifax Needham has said, and I heard that presentation in the Law Amendments Committee, too - where one teacher said they felt like they were being on an assembly line where they were being asked to do one thing and then another task was added to that and another task, and then there was reporting that everything had to be written down - all added to the task of the nuts and bolts.

Effectively what we've done is, we've set up teachers for failure in the classroom. It has reached a crisis point. If there is anything good about this debate and this bill and this action at this time, it has allowed all this to come out in the open. I believe myself that the teacher in a classroom would, as many things in life, go through a process of initially denying they're having this - I believe I can overcome this. I can do this job and I'm denying that I'm having a problem, the teacher thinking they are a problem, and then at some point being willing to talk about it and realizing this is a systemic problem. In fact, I think we've come to that point.

I do believe that the first step to solving a problem is being willing to talk about it and address it. So, we need to talk about what the goals are, and what our expectations of teachers are in a classroom.

I think that for most of us - my age and older - who went to school in the 1960s and the 1970s that the classroom of today is strikingly different and bears very little resemblance to the classroom that we went to - I attended. We have had many teachers tell us about the problems in the classroom of biting and kicking and spitting, of being abused, of there being very little consequence for the student who does that, and of the student who does that, of them being forced to accept that student almost immediately back into the classroom, and of classroom evacuations because a student is acting out. There are daunting, daunting challenges. One of the statements that I heard in the Law Amendments Committee was a teacher who said it felt like we were shuffling deck chairs on the Titanic. We need to address where the ship is going.

I believe that this flawed bill and this flawed process allows us to do that. I know that the teachers I talked to in Kings North said to me it's not about money, we know we're well paid; we believe that there have to be changes in the classroom. The frustration level

that teachers are experiencing that gives them permission to speak out is not because it's affecting them personally but it's because it's affecting their ability to do their job, and they're frustrated that they are not able to meet the needs of all the students. That is what I heard, that teachers are deeply frustrated that they cannot do their job and they are deeply committed to doing their job.

I want to say that I admire when I hear what the teachers are doing. I have to say they have my admiration and respect for what they are attempting to do. And I think it could be said that never in the history of Nova Scotia have we had a better-trained or more professional group of teachers than we have today, especially with the policy of lifelong education that we have in our system. We have very highly trained, professional teachers who are expressing deep frustration that they cannot effectively do their job and meet the needs of every student - and we have to look at in a realistic way what we are asking our teachers to do and what it is we expect of them. We cannot simply keep adding new tasks onto our teachers without addressing what is realistic here and what can be done.

This is the primary frustration I think with this bill and with this current negotiation, and the reason why each successive contract proposed got a higher level of no vote, because teachers have come to the breaking point on classroom conditions, and here we are in this situation.

One of the major things in the issue of classroom conditions is discipline, and I believe that we have abandoned, intentionally or unintentionally - and I don't believe any of this is intentional: I don't believe that this current government is at fault for the circumstances as they are. It's simply the broad sweep of our culture, plus successive governments. But it is incumbent upon this government now to deal with it, and I would say that this is a flawed method of dealing with the current situation.

How did we arrive where we are? We abandoned unintentionally or intentionally two fundamental disciplines within the system, and one of those disciplines which I've heard teachers say is that there is no attendance policy, and the word was there always was I believe a Truancy Act in Nova Scotia - probably still is one on the book just like there's still a snow-shovelling Act. There are some of these old Acts, but if there's no attendance policy, there's no truancy. So, if there's no attendance policy, it's not possible to have a truant, a child absent from school. I know that other provinces do have a truancy policy.

My friends from Manitoba that I mentioned earlier in the House were shocked that a truant student in Nova Scotia didn't get a visit from the school and social services, as happens in Manitoba. If there's no recording or no policy that says a student must attend X number of days at school to pass that course, or if a student misses X number of days they are no longer going to pass, or if a student misses X number of days the school and the department of social services will intervene, there is no attendance policy, we've told the children, rightly or wrongly - and I don't believe anybody really believes that - we have effectively told them that we really don't care if they come to school.

I know there's a truancy problem in the higher grades, and I'm shocked, in what I've had in emails conveyed to me, that there is a truancy problem in the lower grades. I'm shocked at that - Grade 3 teachers who say they have students who miss one to three days every week. How is a student at the critical grade of learning how to read, how are they going to learn to read if they miss one or two or three days every week? I would suggest that's a problem in the home as much as it is a problem with the student at that age.

I believe we need to have a truancy program, an attendance policy, where this will trigger resources being brought to bear. Is it possible that this will have no cost? I don't believe that such a policy is no cost. As I said earlier in the House, I don't believe that there is in reality. Our social services is also pressed to the maximum and there isn't the human resources probably in social services to address this further need without putting some resources into social services, given how widespread the problem is.

It is a question that I would like to know the answer to - how widespread is the problem and how many students are truant and not in class? Anecdotally teachers tell me it is widespread; they also tell me that they are going out of their way themselves to bring these students back to class. I had a teacher tell me that she had picked up a student, in her car every morning, and brought that student to school, for a month, to get that student in school.

I had principals and vice-principals tell me of the extraordinary efforts they go through to bring these students back to school - and I say I deeply appreciate the efforts they go through. I believe that it needs to be a more formalized process, there needs to be a trigger point, that if this X number of days are missed consecutively or if a total number of X number days are missed without good cause - I mean obviously if there's a medical reason, or whatever - that there needs to be a policy that gives the school and the government, through social services, possibly through police services, that there becomes an intervention in that family and these children are brought back.

The unfortunate thing about this lack of an attendance policy is that it sends the absolute wrong message to students. I don't believe this message is intended to be sent by anybody in the system, I believe that everybody - the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the minister, the teachers - all care that students attend school, but if we have this policy of not tracking, we send the message that we don't care, and I believe that we do care deeply about that.

Furthermore, there's a policy that it doesn't matter how late you pass in your work, if you have been given an assignment and it's passed in one day late or three months later, that doesn't matter, you are still marked the same. Again, I don't believe that the minister or the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development or the teachers themselves or the administration really have the attitude that they don't care when the work is passed in. It's sending the message that they really don't care if the work is done at all.

It's sending the message, unintentionally I believe, that what we're teaching you really doesn't matter.

I would suggest to you that everybody in the system believes that what's happening in the system matters deeply. If there are no consequences to passing in work late, to not showing up, if there's a guaranteed pass then we haven't done the students any favour at all; we've done them a huge disservice. In the effort to prepare a student for life or what they need to know to graduate, we've just told them that the world they live in is the world without consequences, they can do whatever they want and everything will be okay.

We know that when they get to the adult world it's a shockingly different world and there are consequences to every action; every decision we do has consequences and we cannot simply wish those consequences away. We know that is the reality of life, that there are many hard struggles in life and it is the hard things you go through in life that make you who you are, and you learn as much, or more, from failure as from success. I know the famous quote, Thomas Edison said he didn't fail to make a lightbulb 200 times, he learned how not to make a lightbulb 200 times before he learned how to make a lightbulb. So perseverance and pluck and determination and fulfilling roles and assignments - if those abilities are within a student - are probably a greater predictor of success than high marks.

I think it is incumbent on us, as this Legislature, as the managers of the system, that we put in place the policies that will teach our children the skills they need to succeed in life. I would suggest to you that a no-attendance policy, no consequences if they don't pass in their material, a no-fail policy, are not doing our students a favour, in fact they are setting them up for a rude awakening when they get to the next level, when they get to university.

We've heard that anecdotally from people. I heard that from a gentleman who had a job to test students who wanted to work in the field that he was in, and if I tell you any more details I would tell you who the person is, essentially, but in a particular field in government and how most of the students, recent graduates who wrote the tests and failed were shocked. This was the first time they ever failed a test in their life and were of the opinion that that wasn't possible, they weren't allowed to fail. In fact they had difficulty dealing with the failure aspect of that.

My belief is, as I've said in this Legislature, that the two things we teach our children is we teach them how to love and how to work. Teaching them how to work is teaching them that in order to succeed they need to put effort in and work. If we let them succeed without ever really putting that effort in, we have not done them any favours, we have hurt them.

I believe that it's fundamental to the process that we build in - and in fact, the fundamental discipline of the education system is, did you learn the material or not and is

there a consequence if you didn't learn the material. If that discipline is taken from the system, as I said, we have not done our students any service.

We heard a number of teachers - as I've said, we've had so many communications from teachers about conditions in the system and as I've said, it's my belief that the fundamental thing is the system that we have is running on human resources and that is what is needed in there.

I know that teachers have talked to us about wanting hard caps in the classes. Obviously that's something that's going to cost money; we have to have more teachers in the system to make a hard cap work. We know there are daunting challenges that our generation of teachers face that were only present in the system at relatively low levels when most of us were in school. I don't know the answer to why the explosion in mental health issues with our young people. Maybe there were mental health issues when we were students and we were just less aware of them.

There's a huge demand in our school system for mental health resources. I know there are programs available and things that we could implement. I know that teachers are looking for this type of help, are desperate to have it and are in anguish over some of the mental health issues that are present in their classrooms. I can think of a couple of teachers who have listed off to me the number of students they've had who have committed suicide, maybe not right in the year that they were teaching them but a couple of years later and it is heartbreaking.

I know that one teacher told me that she had taken on a class of 19 students, and seven or eight of those students indicated they were considering suicide. I believe one had attempted and not succeeded, fortunately. The mental health issues in our school system are a daunting, daunting challenge, and I would not minimize that in any way. But I believe that the first step to solving it is talking about it, so here we are talking about it.

I believe that low-hanging fruit, something that could be done at relatively low cost - I wouldn't say at no cost - is to implement Dr. Stan Kutcher's program. Right here in our own health care system, we have an expert. This program has been adopted in British Columbia, in one of the western American states, and in West Africa. I believe there are countries in the European Union looking at this program. It gives mental health literacy to our students, mental health literacy to our educators, mental health literacy to our doctors. Shockingly, doctors take very few mental health courses. In the challenge of learning everything there is to know about the human body physically, a general practitioner would have only had a couple of days on mental health issues, maybe only one day in three and a half or four years of education.

These challenges, which I would suggest will not be easily met by any of us, are not any government's fault. We're here at this moment in time, and it is the broad sweep of our history, changes in our culture, a variety of things.

We are facing unprecedented challenges in our classrooms from mental health, possibly because of explosive levels of drug usage. That's probably a factor. Mind-altering drugs alter the mind. That can be taken as a general statement. If you're taking a mind-altering drug, you're altering your mind, and in unpredictable ways. That's probably a factor, certainly not in every case.

This is a daunting challenge for our system to address. That's certainly what we hear from teachers. We hear their heartbreak over the situation. I believe that it is incumbent upon us as legislators to talk about this and to say that this is something that needs to be addressed, that the human resources need to be put in place for that.

We know that there's a demand for more speech-language pathologists. Again, I have no idea why. Why do we need more speech-language pathologists than we did in the past? I have no idea why that would be. But nevertheless, we know that that is the case.

Again, there's a demand for more Reading Recovery teachers, and I would suggest to you that has maybe a more clear reason. If we keep passing students when they really didn't learn the material from the previous grade, then clearly we need to have more teachers to track back over what that material was in that previous grade and teach that material.

There's a demand for more learning centre teachers and more guidance counsellors. In my time, a guidance counsellor was someone you only talked to in Grade 10, 11, and 12, or maybe only in Grade 12. I can't remember having a lot of interaction with a guidance counsellor, but there's a demand for guidance counsellors at every level in the education system now, and these guidance counsellors are providing expertise to deal with some of these other issues that we have been talking about.

What we don't need is a committee to study the problems. The problems are well-documented. The problems are documented by the Freeman report. Rather than one committee, we've gotten two committees, with no provision in Bill No. 75 for how a dispute between two committees is going to be solved, although we do have an amendment to solve a dispute between the two co-chairmen of one of the committees. What if the three committees that we have - the Freeman report already in place, the commission, and the council - disagree? What are we going to do then? I would suggest to you that it is a quagmire and not necessary when there are a number of simple things that could be done like an attendance policy.

Another simple thing which could be considered, and I realize, as with everything, it's not that simple, but students coming in at age four, I have to question if they're really ready. I know that - again, I hope he doesn't mind; I don't think he's listening - my son went in at age five. He just got in under the deadline, at that time, of September 30th or 31st.

He was born on September 16th, six weeks premature. He should have been in the next grade.

Later on, we always wished that we'd held him back one year, and then we went on to do that with one of my other sons, because we could see some of the same dynamics. He has become a very successful student.

In the Law Amendments Committee we heard from some presenters about the great and wonderful things happening in Finland. I know it's easy to talk about some other part of the world where conditions are really different, but apparently in Finland they don't start school until age seven. I'm not sure that I want to go there, but I have to question the decision of having children start at age four, and the additional demands that puts on the school system. It seems to me that wherever that decision was made, that needs to be reconsidered.

I've talked about EAs. I've talked about inclusion. One of the things we see in our system is that, if a student is a special needs student but not violent and not a flight risk, they don't attract an EA. I told a story of a Grade 7 teacher in my constituency who had just such a student, and she said to me, "John, all I need is an EA," and I said to her, "Well, how many other teachers would say the same thing?" Daunting, heart-wrenching conditions in that classroom from the lack of that EA.

I had the opportunity to bring before this House a situation where a parent, in Law Amendments - and actually, this was in the unofficial part of Law Amendments that happened after Law Amendments was cut off at 8:00 on Thursday night - told us of the situation where her 13-year-old daughter was a special needs child and was not able to go from class to class without assistance - not able to find her way through the school when classes changed. Another student was designated to shepherd her from class to class, and the reason that she found out this was going on was because her daughter was also a flight risk, and one day left the school and made it home.

Now, why would a student not be able to find her way from class to class but yet be able to find her way home? I can't explain that. Presumably it wasn't far from the school and was a much more well-known path, and if you think about it, class to class is a random thing. Every day it's a slightly different pattern.

I was able to ask in this Legislature if this was normal practice, and the minister said that I should provide the name of this student and parent. I was unable to acquire that name. However, in thinking back, this parent was telling about something that had happened three or four years before.

Is this normal practice in the system? I don't know. But while I was asking the question, one of my colleagues received a message from a parent who said, "Yes, my son has been designated to take one of the special needs students in his class to the bathroom."

Is this one of the ways that we are coping with this? I have to think about that. Am I against that in principle? I'm not sure. I'm not against it if the parents on both parts are well aware of what's happening, and it was clear from my first example that this parent didn't know this was going on, and only found out about it because her daughter showed up at home.

It was also clear from her statement that the parents of the girl who, in Grade 7, was responsible enough - one child, not a cycle of children, but one child - to bring this student to class, but not responsible enough to prevent the flight. That's asking a lot of a child, of a young student. I guess I'm saying that I believe it is happening in our system, and I know that maybe even talking about it will bring more examples forward.

I think that is sort of one of the signs of stress in the system, and I'm not sure that this is a responsibility we should be putting on students. It's a pretty large responsibility. I know from talking to the teacher who told me about the special needs student in her class, some of what she told me was really heart warming. She said to me that the other students just look after this student, they care for her - and it was pretty obvious that this teacher cared deeply for this special needs student too. I believe that is one of the benefits of having them in there.

My belief is that there has never been an insignificant life, a person born on this earth, that every life has meaning and significance. We stand to benefit much more from giving of ourselves than always making it about the fastest and the fittest and the brightest. It isn't about that. It's about caring and love - those are the things that matter in life. If we can teach our children those things through having special needs students in the classrooms, I'm all for that. I believe that what I heard from that teacher was that was what was happening, but at the same time, these things need to be resourced.

There needs to be the adequate resources to deal with the issues, but we shouldn't be asking students in Grade 4 to take other students to the bathroom or a student in Grade 7 to shepherd another student around from class to class. I question that; that's putting too much responsibility on those young lives. But this is the type of thing that we see happening and I believe we see from those two examples we see happening in our classes. At the same time, we know that the students are demonstrating great care for these special needs students, and I want to applaud that and acknowledge that publicly and say that I'm amazed that that is something that has come out in this debate which has touched me in the discussion. So, clearly, there are many good things happening in our classrooms.

In my closing remarks on this hoist motion, I want to say how much I respect the teachers and the job that they are doing, recognizing that there is nothing easy about it and that they face a daunting set of challenges. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to create an environment where teachers can succeed, and I believe that in doing that, we will have created the best possible environment for our students.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader in the House of the New Democratic Party.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to the hoist motion and certainly an opportunity to speak on this and basically delay this particular bill from moving through this process for the next six months, and is something that I talked about in my speeches previously in second reading and in Committee of the Whole House. I'm delighted that I have an opportunity to speak again.

First of all, I want to thank the many Nova Scotians, the protestors, the supporters, the people who presented at Law Amendments Committee - I know it's in the hundreds - and I want to take an opportunity to just reflect on a few in my speech here. I want to apologize in advance because I know that I'm going to be talking about the education system - and I'm going to be talking about in my notes the education that I grew up in in the 1960s. I apologize in advance if I allude to the fact that a lot of my comments are based on the system of the 1960s, so bear with me.

Mr. Speaker, firstly, in my opening comments, with all the different presentations - and I have seen e-mails, I've observed Facebook, and I've participated at the Law Amendments Committee. I want to start off in my opening remarks here today with a post on Facebook this weekend from my daughter and it goes like this - and my daughter's name, Mr. Speaker, for the record, for Hansard, is Ginger LeBoutillier. Ginger is my daughter and she said that she has decided to use the power that I possess, my vote and my voice, to share with others to also use the same powers in the persuading of our elected members to the Province of Nova Scotia to vote against and throw out Bill No. 75. As a beautiful province in one of the best countries in the world, I know we can do better.

The bill and the way it is pushed through in the darkness of the hours of night, with no breaks, went on to hear the voices of Nova Scotians, the citizens who have signed up to speak their truth and to enlighten decision making, is against the growth and development of the Nova Scotia I want to live in.

Then I asked, what would you do? If you are in a Liberal riding, contact your MLA and implore that he or she votes no - I repeat, no, on Bill No. 75. Ginger goes on to say that this is an important moment in history, the people of our province are caring, compassionate people. Bill No. 75 needs to go away so we can see that again the start to repair the damage that has been done between teachers and our government, so that they may work together for the children of our future. And that is signed by my daughter, Ginger LeBoutillier.

Mr. Speaker, last Monday during a winter snowstorm this city, and basically the whole province, was literally shut down. I can assure you that I have seen some inclement

weather in my lifetime, but there was one woman, a protester, Rachel Creasor, and we watched as the power of Rachel's video showed on the Internet and basically went throughout our communities.

Rachel's protest reminded me of in Tiananmen Square, the demonstration in 1989 in China, of a one-person protest who stood against the convoy of tanks. Rachel stood in a blizzard, in stormy conditions, and she stood up against this Liberal Government and Bill No. 75. That certainly was moving to me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I read on Facebook just this weekend the comments of Anne Elizabeth LeBlanc: It is interesting that I got a call from the Law Amendments staff after the Legislature adjourned yesterday, telling me that although I did not present I should still send a written submission. As a polite Canadian, a teacher, and all-round nice person, I thanked her for her time and apologized if she was one of those people I spoke to before and that I had been nasty with.

After I got off the phone I realized that the chances of amendment were over, and my thoughts were that (1) the government wanted to give the illusion that they wanted to hear what the public wanted to say; (2) that they'd still get the public's input; and (3) that the government, as one of the union-busting attempts, in 2016 was trying to meet with teachers, and independently the Nova Scotia Teachers Union - and I'm sure that many of us who did not get to speak at the Law Amendments Committee are teachers.

Mr. Speaker, the comments that I just delivered certainly beg a question. This, to my understanding, is not a normal process in the Law Amendments Committee. Are there other letters sent to the Law Amendments Committee after the fact that my colleagues from both sides do not - I repeat, do not - have access to? That is a fair and good question in our democracy, and I hope that these words go out to whoever may want to review that decision. And, to me, that is certainly a setback when people are suggested to send letters at the Law Amendments Committee.

I want to just highlight in this portion of my speech that the concept or the idea that two wrongs do not make a right. I'm glad we have this particular motion before us, delay for six months, because it's going to make my point even stronger, which I'm about to try to accomplish. The first wrong is the Nova Scotia Supreme Court decision regarding the boundary review as unconstitutional. I asked the Premier a question regarding that this morning in the wee hours of this day, and instead of addressing the question, he attacked the opposite member and did not address the question.

To me, the time is to take that review and do it right - and it can be done in less than 11 months, that is plenty of time in this particular Liberal Government's mandate, roughly 18 months left until 2018. What I said earlier in second reading is that there's ample opportunity to do the boundary review commission, establish that, withdraw this particular

bill and take a step back - and that's the point I was making earlier in this particular motion, it gives you six months to do just that.

Now, I have suggested to withdraw Bill No. 75 and you may say well is that really what we're here for? But I will suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in December of the previous year, 2016, this same Liberal Government withdrew that bill. They suggested for us to come for emergency sitting, we came here and, within minutes, it was withdrawn magically. So, it can be done; we have established that. It can be done, and this government has an opportunity to correct its course. In this light, this Liberal Government is like a ship without a rudder - and there's no pun intended there. A second mistake does not cancel the first, and simply by withdrawing that bill on December 5, 2016, shows you that it can be done.

I would really like to be kind of the fly on the wall in One Government Place or on the Cabinet Table or around the backbenches and understand the decision around the whole scenario about December 5th and withdrawing that first attempt at Bill No. 75. It certainly would be an interesting scenario. Mr. Speaker, I can suggest that withdrawing this Bill No. 75 would be the right thing to do. And, why I say that is because Bill No. 75 is almost guaranteed to be challenged in the courts.

One thing that I raise - and I know that we have many accountants in our midst - is the cost to the taxpayers of this province. My understanding from the B.C. decision in a similar case as Bill No. 75 is that it cost somewhere around \$300 million; to me, that is a really large amount of money. The point I want to make here is over \$300 million after 14 years - a similar case as Bill No. 75 that weaved itself through the court system - 14 years.

The interesting point is that when they got to the Supreme Court of Canada, it took 20 minutes. Now, with all due respect to the Supreme Court judges - 20 minutes? I don't have enough time to read the local paper and have a cup of coffee - 14 years, \$300 million later, 20 minutes. I suggest to you that the 20 minutes probably included reading the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution of Canada which protect every Canadian; there's your 20 minutes. I wonder out loud how that money can be used for health care or even in our classrooms.

I have learned that if you do something bad you will have to suffer from the consequences of what you have done, and that is why I believe that two wrongs don't make a right. I absolutely believe in karma, and I think karma is certainly playing its tricks around Bill No. 75. To me, the interesting fact is this particular bill, Bill No. 75, and the karma and the interesting kind of thing that's being played out - this bill was introduced last week during Teacher Appreciation Week. Now, I would like to go out and just have the opportunity to shake the hands of those teachers who think that Bill No. 75 is showing appreciation for teachers in Nova Scotia.

I guess I ask the question, does this bill recognize the good qualities of our teachers? Does it respect our teachers? I think not. Does Bill No. 75 have the awareness of teachers in the classroom? I think not. Karma over the weekend and the holiday - the holiday, here's another point. The holiday this Monday was Family Day across many provinces in Canada, or in Nova Scotia it's Heritage Day. I find it very interesting to have Family Day - and many families have teachers - and what we are going to discuss in the situations that we have around Bill No. 75. I find that very interesting. Karma can come back and bite you, believe it or not, and I'm sure this is a good example of what we have here today. Certainly, the game is up, and I think that the Liberal Government may understand the true meaning of how karma can come back to bite you.

This Premier has maintained that the reason for introducing Bill No. 75 is because of work-to-rule, and the Premier's speaking notes - and I think we all can recite them here without much effort and quote the Premier: we had three tentative agreements, two executive committees. May I suggest to the Premier's Office and the people who are handling this Premier, it is a broken record, and what they say in my community is, Earth to Premier - you need new speaking notes on this file.

The Premier and the Liberal Party need to listen why these agreements were rejected. Listen to the comments in the Law Amendments Committee - the parents, the teachers, the presenters - pointing out that the problems teachers are facing, such as large class sizes, suggest that this government is trying to put a Band-Aid on an issue.

The Law Amendments Committee clearly showed us the large gap between teachers, students and parents, and the Premier and government does not understand that this system is not working as it should. Teachers are trying to improve the classrooms. It's time to fix our education system.

One story that certainly moved me was the teacher who spoke of her roof that may have fallen in. She asked the question to the members of the Law Amendments Committee, would you fix it? She painted the scenario of her roof collapsing and her family did not have the money to fix it. She asked, would you fix the roof? Of course you would. Perhaps - I would suggest, as she suggested, that you may have to borrow the money. The Premier and the government is hell-bent on balancing the budget at all cost. Education is a priority. Education is Nova Scotia's collapsed roof. We all need to have a collective approval so we can restore our education system. If we are to enter into a deficit to fix the problem, so be it. Our children's future depends on fixing that roof.

Our Internet and the world that we live in and the information that flows through it is certainly a tremendous tool, a powerful tool. The interesting information that I received over the weekend that I gathered off Facebook - and I'm just an average Joe, I'm not the high-tech guru, I'm just an average Internet surfer - one of the comments that I want to share with you now was a possible candidate or nominee for the Liberal Party. That

individual's name is Josephine Kennedy. Her Facebook page, which was brought to my attention, was posted February 16, 2017. I quote from Josephine's Facebook page:

“To the 531 people who have signed up to support me . . . over the past years. I will not be seeking the nomination for the Liberal Party of NS at this time. I cannot support how this government has handled this current situation with the teachers. I firmly believe that our children are our Future and I completely support the classroom teachers. I didn't come to this decision lightly and I stand on principle. Again, thank you for all your support over the years for that I'm deeply am grateful.”

That is signed by Josephine Kennedy from Cape Breton.

If you do some research I would say it is fair to look within my own County of Shelburne. I did that, and it's interesting to note the timelines. Josephine's was on February 16th - this next scenario is December 2, 2016. Now that's an interesting date because it's several days before the previous Bill No. 75 was introduced in this House. Timothy Gillespie from the South Coast Today website said that there was a scathing rebuke of the Nova Scotia Liberals by Seth Renaud - I'll spell his last name because I know I'm driving Hansard crazy at this moment, and I apologize if I mispronounced that.

Seth sent in a resignation letter dated November 30, 2016. Seth pointed out his criticisms of the way the McNeil Government has dealt with the labour issues with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, “I will not be a pawn in a game of ignorant kings.” Seth goes on to say, “It is on this note that I call for a revolution . . . I call for all who are dissatisfied to vote for an independent candidate who speaks plainly and represents by logic and through the voice of the people.”

Mr. Speaker, those words that I just said here in the last 10 minutes are powerful words. They are not the words of the MLA for Queens-Shelburne. They are words from people who never had the opportunity to go before the Law Amendments Committee and they are close to the people who are possibly trying to sit on the backbenches or in the Cabinet Ministers' seats in this House. It is getting close to that scenario. I know at this moment that I have the full attention of the ministers and the backbenchers on the Liberal side of this House with those comments.

Mr. Speaker, last week in Law Amendments Committee we witnessed - or I did for the first time - an armed police officer in the Red Room in Law Amendments Committee. Just to put it into context, in 2001 the Liberal member for Cape Breton-Richmond - the current Liberal Government House Leader, who was responsible for blocking hundreds from speaking at Law Amendments Committee just last week - then the MLA for Richmond blasted Speaker Murray Scott for allowing an armed guard or armed police

officer in the Legislature, in the Red Room, while the Law Amendments Committee was hearing from the public on Bill No. 68.

The then-member for Richmond, now the Liberal Government House Leader said:

“This is not a police state. Nova Scotians do not want a police state . . . the privileges of each member of this House is that we . . . have open and free discussion. Having to go to a place that looks like Dorchester Penitentiary is not free and open discussion . . .”

Now I find those word certainly make the point that I’m trying to make here in the next few seconds: our freedom of speech, in my personal view, has been trampled on, especially in Law Amendments Committee this past week. The member for Cape Breton-Richmond asked a presenter what political Party that individual belongs to. Now some may say it’s intimidation.

To me, it’s no more than interrogation of a presenter. I think those people’s rights were violated. Law Amendments Committee should be where the public has the freedom to express themselves. Canadians have the right to freedom of association. I can assure you that. Presenters at Law Amendments Committee should not be asked what political Party they belong to. The member for Cape Breton-Richmond, in my humble opinion, should stand in his place and apologize to the members of this House and to that individual presenter.

Before I move on, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that what we have seen in this Chamber here in the last week is a heavy police presence. We all talked about the Charter, and I said nice words about our freedoms. When is it going to be that we’re going to have armed police officers in this aisle? When is that going to start? It’s getting close. We see the SUVs with tainted windshields surrounding this building as I speak. Things have changed tremendously certainly since I have come to this Chamber. That is unacceptable, and it’s something that needs to be addressed. How times have changed.

I point to the Premier’s video of last week, as he ran away from this House with a police escort. In the video, the Premier hastily retreats as he leaves with a police escort. I want to draw your attention to that video. I sat and watched it very carefully. The procedure was going on in here - again, I looked at the time. It was orchestrated. They had the SUV out there with tinted windshields. They had police presence at the gate. Within seconds, the Premier left. He walked out through a few protesters and would not even so much as look at them. It was recorded. The camera was recording. Within seconds, he was in the SUV with a tinted windshield, and he was transported. If you look closely, Mr. Speaker, you will see a car blocking the highway so that the vehicle that the Premier was in could leave unheeded. That took some time, and took some organization to pull that off in those few seconds. Is this what this House is coming to? I don’t think it should be. But that’s what I want to point out.

The point I'm bringing here is that we're seeing more and more presence of enforcement, and that is not what our democracy is about. Our democracy is about having the opportunity to speak freely.

In the next election, this Leader of the Liberal Party - I ask, will he be protected by the police to answer those difficult questions about Bill No. 75? I very much doubt that. We're all politicians, and we will be judged on how we handle the difficult files - not the photo ops, something like the Boston Christmas tree campaign.

I truly support that, but I question the amount of money that was spent. I know that was a photo op. This year, \$240,000 was spent on it, \$24,000 for CTV to do a good news story and spin that in the presence of a good, sitting government. Yet when the difficult questions come for the Premier, from CTV and Steve Murphy, a request to do an interview, he declined it. He declined it. You're there for the good times, but when the going gets tough - no, I'm not going to respond to that. Have a nice day. We'll see you on another subject.

If that was just one, I could excuse it, say maybe the Premier's schedule is tight and booked. I can accept a one-off, but within the same week - within the same hours - the people were reminded by Sheldon MacLeod radio show that a request was sent out to the Premier for an interview and it was declined. I automatically stopped in my car and made note of it - twice in several days. I truly believe that politicians will be judged by the voters and the taxpayers and how they handle, not the photo-ops, but the difficult files.

Mr. Speaker, you may be asking yourself, how did the member for Queens-Shelburne while he was in office handle those difficult files, and did he have difficult files? I can assure you, yes I did. One of those difficult files that I had - and I'll give you an example - was aquaculture. I have spoken to MLAs of all Parties across Nova Scotia, throughout Atlantic Canada - P.E.I., New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador - and yes, even British Columbia, and they all agree that aquaculture can be a difficult file for the sitting government members.

While I was the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture I did stop and talk to people. I stopped and talked and I also travelled to the communities. I travelled to the Eastern Shore, Southwest Port Mouton. Did I leave in a hurry and did I go with a police escort? No, I did not. While I was at the Eastern Shore, I actually went to the community and observed the potential sites, and I toured the aquaculture Pleasant Harbour site in that community.

I went out on a boat and there was a protest on the water, and I spoke to the protesters on the water, on the boat, rail to rail. When I left the water and started to proceed to the city, it was a one-lane highway, and the highway was blocked. Did I call the RCMP? No. I simply rolled down the windows and listened to the protesters. I felt that it was the time to listen to their concerns, and I listened intently and there was no RCMP called in.

After a reasonable amount of time, the barricade was taken down and I proceeded on my way. The point that I'm trying to make here is that there was no police escort and there was no backup, but we took the time and listened. With a difficult file, you need to listen and talk to the people, and you'll be judged on that.

During the 2013 election, the very first day of the election, I travelled and campaigned in the heart of the communities that had the heaviest protest against aquaculture. It was against the advice of my campaign manager, I must say, and I travelled to Southwest Port Mouton and picked out the house that had the most anti-aquaculture signs and I knocked on the door. The residents of that particular home could not believe their eyes. He actually invited me in and he asked me if he could invite his neighbours over. Of course I said yes, and we sat there and had a great discussion for over an hour. I can assure you, I listened intently.

The point I want to make here is that the communities, and those protestors, I was engaged with those individuals. Did I change their minds? No, I didn't, but I think they had a respect of how an elected official should deal with difficult files. That is not what I'm observing with this Premier. The hasty retreat, the lack of debate, the police escorts, the tinted windshields - this is not the democracy that I'm aware of.

I know that the Premier is from the Valley. Forgive me - there are a couple of words that come to my mind, like "There's a storm across the valley, clouds are rolling in." Mr. Speaker, those are the opening lines of John Denver's "Back Home Again." I listen to a lot of radio, and I can assure you that, yes, the Premier is living in the Valley, and he may be humming those words, but I want to suggest - and I will include there that there's a political storm across the Valley and clouds are rolling in.

There are new groups forming as we speak to talk about this Liberal Government. There are new groups - the ABC group, and they have shifted their initials to the ABL - "Anyone But Liberal." There is a broken glass group, and that name in itself should send shivers up the backs of the sitting Liberal Government, because the broken glass voters' group will do exactly what that name implies. They will make sure that each and every one of you will not be elected in the next provincial election.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind the honourable member not to refer to members directly but to direct your comments through the Chair.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Let's back up, Mr. Speaker, and do that more diplomatically.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, with these groups that have been formed, and the name of the broken glass voters' group is something - through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member

opposite - that would send shivers up my spine if I were an elected member of the Liberal Government. So, Mr. Speaker, that is through you to those members.

We cannot forget the group Nova Scotia Parents for Teachers. Now, I hope everybody's doing the math, because I've named three or four groups here, but in Nova Scotia Parents for Teachers, last I looked, about a week ago, there were over 21,000 members.

Mr. Speaker, through you to those members, I would mark that down. I would make sure of that number, because what I'm about to say here next, through you to those members, Mr. Speaker - the last election, in 2013, if 4,288 voters had voted differently, this Liberal Government would not have the majority that they have in this House today.

Mr. Speaker, through you to those members, that's a 1 per cent shift - 1 per cent - and there were 10 Liberals in 2013 with a very close margin. It's certainly very easy to check out. Through you, Mr. Speaker: all those groups I've identified, the numbers are in the thousands now. The point I'm trying to make here, through you, Mr. Speaker, is that 4,200 - a 1 per cent shift - certainly got my attention. I think, Mr. Speaker, through you, that it should get the attention of my colleagues across the way.

There was another interesting scenario that played out last week. It was one picture of thousands of protestors from atop a building in close proximity to our Legislature as we speak. The large crowd - the largest crowd that I've witnessed, I must say, in the 10-plus years that I've been here. That picture, Mr. Speaker, I would think would be a reference point for any protest in the future for a long while to come. To me, the picture is worth 1,000 words and, again, if I was on the Liberal bench, Mr. Speaker, I would be paying attention to those pictures. That is why those protestors stood outside this building; that is why they formed those groups that I just mentioned earlier. They want this Bill No. 75 stopped at all costs.

The people's collective bargaining rights certainly have been taken away by this bill. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, through you, that this is what's happening, and I've stood here during second reading and the committee of the whole, and I offered a very I would say common-sense approach, and to me it is certainly an opportunity to say a common-sense approach would be to take Bill No. 148 off the table and withdraw Bill No. 75 so it cannot pass. And to me, we all know that Bill No. 75 is headed to the Supreme Court of Canada and I pointed out earlier - 20 minutes, 20 minutes for a decision that took 14 years to wind itself through the political systems from B.C. Government to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Now, you have to ask if that's a similar scenario here, why are we doing it? There's an interesting point here that I watched both Opposition Leaders say that they would appeal that particular bill. So, what's that worth? It was worth to me that there is a safety valve at work in our democracy, and if the people understand what's going on here the other checks

and balances is that the people can remove the sitting government at the next election. And I can assure you during debates coming up the topic of the Supreme Court decision, the cost of winding itself through that, the cost to the taxpayers will be a ballot-box question as we move into that next election.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members opposite through you, is this the legacy that this Liberal Government wants to be left with? The first time in 122 years a full, province-wide education strike. That's their legacy.

The one thing that has really bothered me is the Liberal's silence speaks volumes; the Liberal's silence is deafening. My observation is the absence of a response from the backbenchers and the present ministers on Bill No. 75 - citizens have a thirst to have their voice on Bill No. 75, but yet the ministers and backbenchers sit in silence.

My democracy is the opposite. It's engagement and the relationship between citizenships and the government and the elected officials. That is something that I cherish as a Canadian, and I think, with all the access to the Internet and the television that we have, that people are going to pay attention to what I just said. And, again, that's going to be a ballot-box question: Did my MLA stand up and voice their concerns, pro or con, on this? They sat silent. Hansard would say this very easily; you can go in there and check out any one member, how much they spoke on it - and it was just a token gesture or words by the minister to introduce this bill. That's the minimum amount, and to me, I suggest that is shameful, that is shameful to the democracy that we certainly have to cherish.

Mr. Speaker, this government over the last three years has presented at least six or seven labour bills; the most noticeable were Bill No. 148 and Bill No. 75. It has destroyed - I repeat, has destroyed - the democracy process here in Nova Scotia and this Premier is forcing his MLAs to follow him down this anti-labour path.

Democracy is based on the idea that everyone should have equal rights and be allowed to participate in making important decisions. If the Liberal Government is successful, it is the beginning of the end of democracy in Nova Scotia. Without the protection of collective bargaining rights, we are going to backtrack to over 100 years in this province. It is truly a sad day for all Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, of course this government certainly has a track record. I want to just emphasize that on my winning the seat in 2013 and getting into the position I am in, I had the opportunity to create a star chart for the present elected government members, all of them, in 2013. I apologize early because this is what I'm getting into, I'm dating myself because the star chart was certainly part of the school atmosphere in the 1950s and 1960s. The star chart was used then and I've used it today to recognize - and I'm sorry if I offended the Opposition members here but you're not in the chart. It's just the sitting Liberals who were elected in 2013.

I've got a report card that I'm going to present here in the next few minutes. The chart recognizes who has shown leadership, especially in debates in this very Chamber. Some of the most promising debaters are - and I want to remind you again that it was all the elected MLAs for the present Liberal Government. Some of the leading debaters are as follows: the MLA for Glace Bay, the MLA for Halifax Clayton Park is doing very well, the member for Yarmouth certainly has a few stars on my chart and particularly the one that has shone most is the MLA for Lunenburg West. He has shown tremendous promise and I want to recognize the member for Lunenburg West for showing that promise. (Interruption)

My colleague said he probably - I don't think this particular judge is very unbiased and fair and not because he married a girl from Woods Harbour, I don't think that had anything to do with it. I observed him in different debates - I've always said that I recognize that but it's sad to report that he has avoided the debates on Bill No. 75.

I wrote a whole essay on this particular member for Lunenburg West and I did it in three words - in three words I did it, Mr. Speaker, I wrote a whole essay. It's not easy to write an essay and capture everything about the member, the sitting Party and how that member participates in debates and I actually did it with just three words. Those three words are: a cop-out

Now, unfortunately, he's falling behind, but I'll give you an update on some of the other potential candidates who may win this.

The MLA for Bedford certainly has great potential, but because of her lack of participation in Bill No. 75, I'm suggesting to her that she may want to write a few - 100 lines, I'm suggesting. Those 100 lines must say: I must stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people, the teachers, who elected me, and I cannot use the excuse of being the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education to prevent me from doing so. And yes, free collective bargaining is in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms - 100 times.

Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park certainly shows a lot of promise for her knowledge of the classroom - again, not in the race. The member for Halifax Atlantic has shown great potential, and I actually had him down for a possible Cabinet shuffle in that position but he lost it all just this week in a temper tantrum in late debate.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on. The MLA for Annapolis, the Premier was an early chart leader, and I can tell you that after the release of the premature video of the teachers' agreement, the people saw the light. With the broken promises of a doctor for every Nova Scotian, the handling of the Film Tax Credit, and the Seniors' Pharmacare - he has certainly fallen right off the chart, and that is sad.

I have a few more, Mr. Speaker. The MLA for Clare-Digby, and I have given him a few gold stars and I think he's very deserving of them. However, after the MLA's

performance in the last two weeks, these accomplishments have vanished like the fog in the Bay of Fundy on a hot summer day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know you're going to ask the valuable question, who is in the lead in this particular race? It's a dark horse that has certainly come out of nowhere. He has emerged in the last few weeks and technically, I told you earlier, it was all the elected Liberals in 2013. The name of that leader, that dark horse on this star chart is - drum roll please - the MLA for Dartmouth East, the member for Dartmouth East is on the chart. He deserves to be there. I am a fair judge, we've established that. I said that because he was on the chart and he has participated and he got several stars for crossing the floor, he got several more stars for standing up and speaking on Bill No. 75.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this star chart - I could call it other names but I find that very interesting. Because of the conditions, I think that star chart should be called the Stars on Ice, and after the next provincial election the Stars on Ice will take on an altogether different meaning.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is getting short here but we've certainly learned some valuable lessons. I know there's certainly an amount of lessons we have established and perhaps the hardest lesson is the lesson of common sense. I hope we all certainly will take our homework home.

I'm going to leave you with homework to do. You may want to get your pen ready because the lesson is going to probably be one of the most valuable lessons that you all can learn in the next few years or the remaining part of your life.

That lesson - I hope everybody's got their pen ready because there is some homework to do to get this lesson, and we need to get it right because there's going to be a decision made across the aisle here very shortly. This is an assignment. This is homework. This is a report card that you need to take to your constituents. That homework is to do some research. That research is going to summarize all the events that took place here in the last two weeks, and it's going to be done with two sentences that will identify what is happening in this process. There are going to be two sentences that you are going to remember for the rest of your life. That homework - and everybody's got their pen in hand and I want you to turn to the Bible. I want you to turn to John 8:32. Two sentences and I can assure you that if you read those two verses, you'll have a better understanding and you'll have a conscience, and when you vote on Bill No. 75, I want you to take the time to reflect on those two sentences that I'm telling you.

Please do the homework - and I am not a teacher, but there are plenty of teachers out there who want to have an opportunity to speak to their elected officials. This is the only way that some can do it. Please take the time. Do the research, and when you make that decision on Bill No. 75, please look at those words.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end on that - John 8:32. Thank you for your time.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for the vote on the amendment to Bill No. 75. There has been a call for a recorded vote.

We'll ring the bells for one hour.

[12:08 a.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. I'll remind all members to stand up with a simple "yea" or "nay."

The Clerks will now proceed with the recorded vote on the amendment to Bill No. 75.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[1:08 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson
Mr. Belliveau
Ms. Roberts
Ms. Mancini
Mr. Orrell
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. Houston
Mr. Younger
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Lohr

NAYS

Mr. Churchill
Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Mr. Samson
Mr. McNeil
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Ms. Casey
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. Colwell
Mr. Horne
Mr. Stroink
Ms. Miller
Mr. Hines
Ms. Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Kousoulis

Mr. Furey
Mr. Farrell
Ms. Arab
Mr. Maguire
Mr. Porter
Mr. Jessome
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Eyking
Mr. Irving
Mr. Gough
Ms. Treen
Mr. Wilton
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Mombourquette

THE CLERK: For, 14. Against, 33.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

We'll continue with third reading of Bill No. 75.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

MR. LARRY HARRISON: I just want to take an hour of your time, Mr. Speaker.
(Laughter)

I want to say at the outset that the top is now off and a lot of issues have certainly surfaced in the last week or so. I liken it to opening up a box with a Christmas tree in it that's brand new. You take it out, you put it up and you don't like it and then you try to put it back into the box again - it can't happen. We're not going to be able to get everything back into the box as it was, we're going to have to start new, in many ways.

I just want to take a few moments to talk about a word that I think has to do with the bill, with everything that we do. That word that I want to talk about for a few moments is "respect." I want to approach my job always with respect, not only as a human being but I'm also a child of God, if I can speak in those terms. My mandate for living is to love and care for everyone who crosses my path - no exceptions.

I have been criticized at times for not taking a stand. I go back to the 1980s when our church, the United Church of Canada, was having the question put forth: should we or should we not ordain gay and lesbian folk? People would come up to me and say okay, where do you stand on this? My answer was always I have one mandate only and that is to love and care for everyone who crosses my path. (Applause)

Now the bad part is, have I always been true to the mandate? The answer is no, I have not always been true to the mandate, but it doesn't change the mandate for my desire to live up to it. I have colleagues - not these folks, but clergy, Mr. Speaker - who have gone with the approach in ministry, a confrontational approach. They say that unless the church is unsettled and in controversy, they are not doing their job.

I always wanted to put fires out, I never wanted to light them. There's so much going on in families, there is so much going on in the work arena, so much going on in communities, that it's very unsettling for people. I wanted my church environment to be a haven for people. I want the church to be that place where people would come and see their best self and their best self to others not the worst. I worked very hard to create that atmosphere in Middle Stewiacke and in Brookfield for 33 years and in other churches when I had contact.

Anyway, I've been in this Legislature now for three and a half years. I have seen many demonstrations over that time. I have seen a lot of bills go through this House; many of them did not get through the House without a fight. Now, I may not have liked what was said and done at the time; I don't like what's being said and done all the time here now, but I do want to remain respectful of everyone. These are not my rules. These are the rules given to me out of my faith. I don't want to have one set of rules and values here and have another set of rules and values for my life outside. (Applause) One thing I have learned in all my years is this - and I'm sure that every one of you folks, through you, Mr. Speaker, has learned the same thing as well - when people are at their best, good things will happen. That's just a given. To put it another way, when people are content in their environment, good things will always happen. It's like saying, if mama ain't happy nobody's happy. So, what's our mandate as men? We make sure mama's happy. We try to set that atmosphere always.

Now, if one is not happy when they go to work, then it's going to be a chore and you're not going to get the best out of them because you can't give your best. I've seen bosses put fear in employees and then these bosses wonder why they don't get the work out of people or the respect from people. If bosses treat their employees with respect and show care, the employees are going to want to do the job and to do that job well.

Anyway, I want to thank you for my little digressions here, but we're in a situation with the teachers now and it has so many facets to it. I mean, the issues are just way out there. When I go to the schools for Remembrance Day services or for graduation or for other functions, I see teachers doing their job and I always thought, you know, with competence and care. I had no idea there was all this stuff in the background that they were kind of suffering on the inside. I had little idea, until last week, the extent of the suffering - little idea.

Now, somehow, the message should have been out there long before this. How it was going to get there I don't know. I just felt that it should have been. Now, we can say

that it's the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's fault, we can say it's the union's fault, it doesn't matter who's right and who's wrong. The fact is, our teachers are not happy in their environment right now. If they're not content, what's going to happen is our education system will suffer. All of these teachers are not going through this because it's a fun thing to do. They're going through this because they are unable to do what they were called to do, and that is to do the teaching of our children.

I have heard in this Legislature time and again about creating a workforce in Nova Scotia having a good work ethic, people that are educated in all kinds of areas so that we don't have to bring in expertise in from the outside. To have this, there will need to be a re-evaluation of our educational system. Right now, we have a very messy atmosphere for education to be at its best. We have the teachers, and they're great teachers. We need to set an atmosphere whereby they can do their job, in a good atmosphere. This atmosphere has to have safety, and it has to have respect. Without these two values, nothing is going to work the way it should.

One thing that needs to be looked at is class sizes. Having students in a classroom without desks or without chairs does not make for good learning. The teacher can only communicate well with a certain number of children at a time. I don't know what that number is, but they do. They must.

No one was going to say anything about the idea of being inclusive. That has been something on the backburner. But everyone needs to be able to live up to their capabilities. Everyone needs a social aspect in living. The school classroom is not the only answer for this. There are parts of the system that do help to develop children with challenges. There's no question about that. I've talked to teachers who have done that. But there are parts where they will need something outside the classroom for their learning. Right now, the range of needs are so varied in the classroom that learning is a very difficult thing for the students to do, and teaching is difficult for teachers to do. My question is, who wins? I don't think anyone wins.

Discipline is a huge thing. I actually said to a resource teacher in Brookfield that I'm so happy that a lot of this stuff does not take place in the Brookfield schools. She looked at me. I said, uh-oh, you're telling me it's the same? She said yes, it is. I was surprised. I know there are a lot of kids out there - a lot of good kids. Teachers absolutely love working with them and spending time with them. But there's a significant number of students who are very difficult and who are really disrespectful.

Until last week, I had no idea of the extent of the violence that's in our schools, student against student and student against teacher. No one should ever have to work in an environment where safety is the issue. Teachers should never be subjected to threats, being punched, spit upon, bit, or having things thrown at them. I was at a Masons' curling tournament on the weekend, and there was a couple of teachers there. One guy rolled up

his sleeve and showed the bite marks on his arm. The behaviour is not just a random act that happens maybe every couple of years. It's very, very real within our school system.

There has to be accountability for these actions because if they're not accountable, they're going to feel and behave as though they're not accountable out there in the world when they leave school. We should always remember that our rights stop when they infringe on the rights of others. I've told people that. Your rights are only there until you start stepping on the rights of others. I have to laugh, not in a funny way, by the way, at the programs on television. Someone who killed another human being is arrested and taken in and says, I know my rights. Well, those rights stopped when they infringe on the rights of the person they killed.

The accountability of being in school and having assignments done on time - I guess one of the arguments for this policy is that we need to be concerned about the students' self-esteem. Failing is hard on one's self-esteem; I know, I've been there. I failed a grade, and it's no fun, but it was a lesson that I needed to do more work in order to pass the next time.

The universities, the places of work are going to expect a certain standard and if the standard is not met, you're going to be gone. Wouldn't it be a good thing to teach this lesson early? The boss gives you an assignment. Are you going to say, oh I'll do it sometime, I'll get around to it in the next six months or so? Not likely. You have a job that requires you to work so many hours. Are you going to show up once a week or once or twice a month? What are we teaching our children? This is not teaching them to be accountable and responsible in day-to-day living.

You know, I could cover a whole lot. These are just a few difficulties that teachers have to put up with but shouldn't have to put up with. I know there's not a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, I know that monies are tight, but I do know that other things can be done without much cost. We're very fortunate, you know, to have the quality of teachers that we have. It's not just in the classroom, but it's when they offer themselves outside the classroom as coaches, mentors, counsellors, tutors, and the list could go on.

I know that a hard line needs to be drawn at times. I don't think now is the time. I think the teachers really have legitimate concerns, and we should do everything in our power to try to address those concerns. I don't want to blame anyone for how we got here, but we're here and we need to do something to get to a better place. It will take all the good that we can put in this situation and this includes government, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the school boards, teachers, union, parents, and, yes, the students. We are all a part of this mess, and it's going to take all the care and respect we can give it to clean it up.

We want our school environment to be safe, to be respectful, to be a place to learn how to be good citizens as well as learn academic work. Yes, some things need to be

discussed, but some things just need to be done now. I feel we need to let the teachers know we care about them and the system because the longer this discontent continues, the longer it will take to gain the trust and respect needed for a good learning environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's.

HON. DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that I do have the opportunity to stand here and speak in this House. This opportunity has been presented to me because of the democratic system. Each and every one of us in this House has been honoured by a seat representing a constituency because of the democratic system. That is one of the things that I'm afraid is under attack in our province by the Liberal Government.

We can see that because there are many examples where the things and precedents, the way this House was run in the past and the Law Amendments Committee were done on a basis of fairness, and, things have changed. I mean, it's amazing the number of protests, since this government received their mandate, that have marched around this House, and most of them have been from the fact that the government has been trying to take rights away from hard-working Nova Scotians.

Those rights are historical rights that people have worked very hard for, and, in fact, people have lost their lives in many wars fighting for the right of a democratic system. We have many veterans who suffer today because of giving of themselves to fight for what we believe is a democracy. If you talk to most people and ask them what does a democracy mean to them, most people are going to reply that it's a fair, balanced system where everybody has the opportunity to provide their opinion and to be heard.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that hasn't happened under this government. It started right from the home care workers, went through the nurses, and it continues. There's a particular agenda we can see is taking place here and it is an unfortunate one. Now we're dealing with the teachers. I say it's very unfortunate because there are many situations where people thought they were voting in the opposite. It was because of what they were told, it was how things were promoted through the media before the last election. And that is why many people voted for this government, because they felt this government was going to be fair to all working people in the province. There's no doubt about it when you have at the time the Leader of the Official Opposition taking ads in newspapers promoting himself as an individual who respected the union, respected collective bargaining.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that's one thing that, as a politician myself, has really, really bothered me in all these processes, the fact that, as we know, politicians are not looked at with a great deal of respect, the reason being that we all do get painted with the same brush. I do know that members in the Liberal Government ran for the reason that they wanted to be there for their constituents and that they have a desire to make a difference.

It changes so quickly when you get behind and inside these doors and then, all of a sudden, the Party line becomes more important than the person you met at the door whom you've told you'll do everything possible and stand up for your constituency against your Party. I'm sure there were a number of members who did that, and they should reflect back to those conversations they had at the door, saying that as a member I'm here for you and believe in you.

People thought that their vote in the last election was a vote for reasonability, because they were seeing a person who wanted to become Premier telling them publicly that he was there for them and respected their process. What I find very difficult as a politician, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that that certainly did not happen. You can see that it was planned, it wasn't like getting into government and going oops, where this is the way it really is and that's the way it really is. It doesn't matter what the government has in terms of dollars and cents and using the financial basket as the excuse, that is not an excuse for being disrespectful and not listening to people and not providing the democratic system. It makes no difference what your budget looks like, it's how people are treated and they have not been treated well under this government over and over again. There's a theme to it, so it's obviously, as we can see, one of the major themes is with unions.

Whether or not, you believe in unions, Mr. Speaker, everything in life has positives and negatives to it. It doesn't matter what you want to argue, there's going to be positives and negatives. You are going to pick out those negatives if you are on the opposite side and you're going to pick out the positives if you are on the government side. But at the end of the day unions have had a significant role in our society. All we have to do is pick up the history books and see the role that unions have played in actually truly saving hard workers' lives. There are many incidents in history where workers were being put in a situation dangerous to their well-being and that if it wasn't the union coming in and fighting for that, that individual may have lost their lives or groups of employees losing their lives. There are a number of examples of the role that unions played in making sure that we do have a safe and proper workplace.

There are some companies we know examples of that actually do not need a union because they have respected the fact that their employees and their needs are very important, and they are the smart corporations who understand that those who are doing the work each and every day are the ones who are creating their product or their brand, and that if you have a satisfied workplace and people feel that they have the opportunity to voice their concerns and those concerns are addressed, and you can't always get what you want, but many times that if the percentages are that you realize that your employer is listening to you and trying his or her best in order to come to a balanced approach, then people do respect that.

However, that hasn't happened with this government. That's what is very disappointing and upsetting - because of the fact that when you tell people and you take the time and you plan to promote what you stand for and then when you're elected you turn

completely a 380-degree change, that's not good. That's not fair to the public. That's not fair to the rest of us as politicians. We can go through example after example.

We're talking about the teachers, but we can also bring in the film industry where a planned press conference was given before the election with the industry members because they were told that a Liberal Government would support them with at least a five-year budget program that they would not have to worry about coming back each and every year. It was the complete opposite.

It's like the story that we were read many times in school - the little boy who called wolf. That's what has seemed to happen with this government. Too many times over they've said one thing when they really meant the other, and then when it came to put it in action, it was the others.

I don't think that there is a member in the Liberal Party who can deny that, and I don't know how they can justify that because the members of the Liberal Party have seen the exact same thing as we have and what the public have seen, so it's not a difference in opinion as maybe you will say when we get in arguments in this House. How can it be a difference of opinion when it's absolutely the facts that we have seen before the last election, and then what we've seen after this Liberal Government was given a mandate?

With respect to democracy, we really need to take it seriously as we see that democracy is being challenged around the world. Many of us have often said that one of the greatest privileges for us to live in Canada is the fact that we live in a democratic society. This has been jeopardized here in Nova Scotia, and it's almost a similarity to what we see taking place in the U.S. and the unrest there, and that people have been divided and fighting against each other, when you have a President that says that we're supposed to have one America, one United States. Well how do you have one United States when you're dividing people - you're dividing organizations, you're dividing races, you're dividing those people who have given their lives to save the United States? This seems to be the same thing that's happening here.

Every time that we have an issue we're dealing with, the Premier's first attempt is to blame others, and that's a continuation - we've seen that over and over, and over again. And, I mean, if you have such a desire to become a government, I think after three or three-and-a-half years it's time to stop the blame game and do the business that you intended to do.

That same blame game we saw - there are many who sit across the aisle from us here, Mr. Speaker, who did not see the Premier in action as Opposition, and I think that they should take that little bit of time and review the Hansard from that time because there are many things that were said by those who were in Opposition that today they're doing the very opposite. It's part of the role of Opposition, but many times over they would stand up and say to the government, you should pay for this, you should pay for that, you're not

covering this, you're not doing that. It's quite ironic that when the seats change it's the same - it's about the money.

Well, austerity budgets are being proven that they do not work because you're not investing into your communities, your societies, you're not creating work, and you're also being reactive rather than proactive, which means that a lot of these things if you really wanted to follow and trace them over time and going into the future you will see that it actually, in fact, costs governments more money in the long run and the problem being is that the long run is down the road - and that is not typically the concern of a government. They will talk about the future, and the only way they utilize the future is to say we're doing a review, and that's one of the things, or excuses, that the Liberal Government continually uses.

I respect the fact that you want to do a review and find out where you are on a particular issue, but there is the fact of a reasonable time element to do that and not continually say that we're reviewing or we are planning. Then the public sees it happen, and I think that this has happened with the teachers' issue.

This was not going to be an issue; the Liberal Government never dreamt that the Education and Early Childhood Development portfolio was ever going to be an issue for them. It was going to be their golden apple in the next election and, unfortunately, they are the ones, not us, who have allowed that golden apple to rot, and now they're going to deal with that rot. Some of it comes from basically the fact that people believe in a democratic system, and people feel that they need to be heard, and they feel that they need to be a part of that - and there's not one member in the Liberal Government who has not exercised their democratic right, whether before they were elected or since they've been elected.

One of the most important things, I believe, in life is trying to put yourself into somebody else's shoes, and we often say that we know what that is like or we assume we know, but we really do not know unless we have that experience or we try to have the closest experience possible to be able to empathize with what someone else is going through - and part of that is to be able to provide the opportunity for people to voice their opinion.

So it was a huge disappointment to many in this province that the Law Amendments Committee restricted the number of individuals who could speak. You can see as you sit back and you watch this process and you're involved in it, you see all sorts of little things that do not sit right with you. The fact that with the Red Room, suddenly we have the fire marshal's decision that only X number of people are able to go in there during Law Amendments Committee. However, we should do some head counts when there's an event put on by the government. I've been in that Red Room when there have been many more people in that room than are allowed in during Law Amendments Committee. So, where did the fire marshal's rule come from, all of a sudden? If that's a fact, then shouldn't we be abiding by the same rules?

It's the same with the gallery. We never really had an issue with how many people can come into the gallery. This beautiful Province House was renovated not so many years ago, and if at that time there was an issue with the numbers of people who could come as guests and listen to us, why wasn't that addressed at that time? Suddenly, though, when the Liberal Government gets in, now it's, what, only 30 passes that are allowed to be there? Once again, it goes back to "it's a fire marshal issue." Very strange that no one ever picked that up before and nobody discussed that when renovations took place.

If we're only allowed to have 30 people, then when it was renovated, why was only enough room for 30 people made? Why were we not informed, as members of government? These things just come out of the blue, it seems. But every one of them, if you look at them, is a control. It's a control for the government to try to keep down the number of people who want to voice their opinion or want to be able to see the procedures in this House during a contentious issue. It's very obvious. I spoke with a reporter, and he said that out of his number of years - 17 or 20 years - this kind of action that has taken place, he'd seen happen five times in that career. Four of them have been under this government in three or three and a half years.

What does that say about democracy? Obviously, the other Parties who had the opportunity to be government really respected democracy and respected the fact that if, as a government, they've made a decision and a number of the public are not pleased with that decision - at least if you make that kind of decision and you believe in it, you should be able to hear those who have an issue with it.

When you run and hide and you have the House open in the midnight hours and over the evenings to try to reduce the number of people who may be protesting or the number of people who will be coming to the House and participating, there's something wrong with that. That's not democracy. That's putting a wedge in front of democracy and doing whatever you can. If you really believe in Bill No. 75, then every individual who wanted to speak on that bill should have had that opportunity. Coming up with this suggestion of this mini committee, just on the fly - because that's what happens. It's this last-minute, on-the-fly, well, we'll do this.

Well, that was another strategic plan to be able to just stand in the House and blame the Opposition, that they did not support that committee. That committee, the second committee, would not have been able to hear everybody anyway, at the end of the day. There might have been 75 other people. The way that those individuals - those parents, those teachers, those students - should have been heard was through the regular practice of Law Amendments. That's what that committee is for.

I don't know of any other government that has done so many twists and turns to stop the public from coming in to speak about a bill. Whether they're in favour of it or not, that is the place. I find it very ironic, because so often we'll be stopped on a point and say, well, that's the way it is - whether it's policy or the way the House runs, that's the way it

is. Well, why are those things not followed under a government made up of Liberals? Once again, it's putting a wedge against democracy. There's no other way to define it, Mr. Speaker.

If we were brought back to this House to do our work, what is the reason for the fact that the Law Amendments Committee was cut short? The only reason can be the fact that the government wanted to ram this bill through and things didn't go as predicted or strategized, not everything went the way that the government thought it would go.

I find it very sad because of the fact that if you're supporting a bill and you believe in that bill, you should have absolutely no problem listening to all the people who want to come in to speak about it. It should not be an issue at all. If you believe in something then you should be able to back it, and you should be able to back it by sitting in a committee and listening to people.

The other thing that was very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that was kind of unusual with the Law Amendments Committee was the fact that we saw a lot of Cabinet Ministers sitting around that table, which actually should be the way it is all the time, but it's not. The public does not see the Law Amendments Committee on a regular basis. People are out working very hard to get through everyday life, but we noticed - those who are given the privilege to work in this House and to represent our constituents - we saw the fact that members of the Cabinet sat around the table. That was because there are backbenchers who we know are having some issues with this, and they didn't want them to be put in that situation to listen to the very heart-tearing stories about the classroom conditions.

Those classroom conditions, I have to say myself, I did not have any idea that they were as bad as what we heard at the Law Amendments Committee. Can you imagine going to your place of employment every day and wondering if you are going to get bitten or hit or scratched or spit at? Can you even imagine doing that?

I do not lay blame on this government for all those issues in the school system. We know that this has happened over a number of years and many governments have missed the boat on that one. There's always good that comes out of bad and perhaps out of all this we have learned a great deal more about the education system and, as many have said, the teachers have found their voice. I think that's absolutely wonderful because once again, that is part of the democratic process.

I think there was always a fear for teachers to speak up in a coordinated group effort. I think the other thing is because the teachers are so busy focusing on their classrooms and focusing on teaching that where would they have the time to be involved in what goes on in this House? They also voted us in as representatives because that's part of the democratic process. They voted us in because they believed in each and every one of us, that we would look after them. I know for sure that they believed this Liberal Government would look after them. I heard that from many teachers, that they were

actually very shocked and surprised because that's what they were told, not just verbally, it was in writing. They were told they would be looked after by this government.

The government is trying, because things didn't roll out exactly the way they had predicted that, well, we'll bring a committee together and allow teachers to have the opportunity to voice their opinions. But why wasn't that done? Three to three-and-a-half years, and that was not done, that was not ever discussed with the union or presented as a possibility because the government was hearing that teachers were not getting their message through the union because that's what the government has told us. Now they're making an assumption, or they've talked to some teachers, and they feel that way. So why wasn't that brought in as part of the educational plan?

That's what I find that the government is very good at: designing plans and sitting on them or putting dates on them with expectations. We know the school plan now and having a committee of nine teachers, all of that will be focused around when the Premier decides to call an election. It's the same as other issues in health care. We're going to make an announcement now in 2019. Some of these things were announcements promised three or four times.

I think there's no question that, over the last week or so, the whole issue about democracy being ripped away from Nova Scotians has come to a head and has really shown itself in this dispute. It is very unfortunate because it is going to take a very long time for any Nova Scotian to try to trust a government, and you can't blame them. I'm sure that if any of the members were on this side, they would certainly be bringing these points up.

Mr. Speaker, it's all about justification. As I said, there are good points and bad points to anything. But I find it interesting when I hear justification from those who are sitting in the Liberal Government about why Bill No. 75 is a good bill that they would vote for. It's kind of mind-boggling when you've had the number of people who wanted to come and talk and the amount of people who have come out to protest, especially during the winter months, when it is so cold and windy, in blizzard conditions. People felt so strongly about what this government is doing and about Bill No. 75 that there were many people who risked their lives on the roads to come to this House to protest.

That has to be worth something rather than the government saying, oh, we're listening to teachers. How do you listen to teachers when they're here, and you turn them away? I don't think that's listening to teachers.

You say, well, we're going to have this committee. At least it's something, I guess. But we learned the other day that those who are being selected will be selected through superintendents - once again, management control. Then on the committee, they reduced the representation of the union from two to one. Don't think that this is just the way the committee is set up just because it's being set up. That's all strategic on the part of the government.

That is why the amendment that we appreciate being supported was presented to no longer allow the co-chairs to be the ones to bring in an arbitrator. It's all planned to say that everyone on that committee now has to be in agreement to bring in an arbitrator. Doesn't that reduce the opportunity to bring in an arbitrator? That's what it's all about: once again putting a wedge in democracy.

I believe that the government will find that out. Hopefully, at the end of the day, democracy will prove that it does work because when it comes to the next election, that is a democracy that this government is not able to strategize and put a wedge in. There will be things that will be tried, but there still will be more power in the people during the next election. I am sure that we will see.

As much as members in the government want to justify Bill No. 75, we have been told and they have been told it does not address any of the working conditions in the classroom. It doesn't address the direct issues that the teachers are dealing with. There's many things that this government has the power to do in terms of quickly making changes. When the government wants to do things like that they find a way to do it, so why can't they find a way now instead of waiting until this committee has a report and then waiting because we have to review the report. Probably all in the strategy of the next election to ensure that this report either does not blow up in their face - it's all being strategized. I think that people are seeing that now and people are understanding more of how this political game works.

I do have hope that the democratic process will win at the end of the day and that the voices of Nova Scotian parents, students, and teachers will be heard, and that the wedge of democracy will not be able to continue under this particular government. They've had their opportunity, but I have not seen a lot of democracy in the way that things have been handled over the last three to three and a half years. We need to bring that democracy back, and we will all work very hard to bring that democracy back.

As I mentioned, the government has the power and means to make changes now as I stand here and speak. They could be addressing some of those concerns. I heard stories at the Law Amendments Committee about having a psychologist, that there aren't enough in the system and that in some schools a psychologist is only able to visit every week and a half. The number of students they're dealing with are rising and rising. Those things we can deal with immediately. The fact that teachers have to be dealing with so many students who have issues, it's a different world than it was when we went to school, but the problem is that governments have not gone with that change. They act as if we're back years ago. This government could have kept their golden apple with the Education and Early Childhood Development portfolio if they would have believed enough in democracy, because it doesn't look good.

I don't think sometimes the government members realize that people discuss things amongst themselves, and teachers have family members and friends and have had the

opportunity to try to at least voice their opinion and it was taken away from them. It won't be long that it will be going through communities. There is also a rising number of groups forming to go after the government because people didn't have a chance to speak at the Law Amendments Committee.

It's quite baffling to me because what would have been the difference for us to be here and not going over midnight - doing the regular hours - and getting all those speakers through the Law Amendments Committee, which is why we have that committee in Nova Scotia, and we are very privileged to have that committee. Tell me, what would have been the difference if we were here another week to allow people to speak? I believe that would have made a difference in some people's minds with respect to the government - at least they allowed us to speak. The worst thing in the world is to not listen and to empathize with what somebody is going through. There were some real heart-wrenching stories from teachers. There were many stories and we should have sat through each one of those stories until everyone in the province had an opportunity. You know, this government has gone through those issues in Law Amendments on a number of occasions, as I mentioned before how this government's attitude and the way it runs the province is just totally different than what we've seen from other governments, and that this would be happening for the fourth time in three and a half years.

Is it a show of power that you cut off Law Amendments? But that show of power is exactly what caused a lot of problems in the negotiations with the unions because I don't think our Premier understands that when you go to the table you go to the table in a fair, balanced way and you don't have preconditions - and you don't have a bill such as Bill No. 148 hanging over your head. I mean, anybody reasonable would understand the fact that negotiating at that level there's a great deal of back and forth and back and forth. The Premier's talking point is to continually get up and say, well we did it three times and now it's over.

But people are ridiculing the Premier for that because the fact is they're saying he doesn't understand the process of bargaining. You don't go in and try to bargain with somebody and say well you can't talk about this, we're not going to discuss this, and if we don't agree with you we're going to bring in Bill No. 148. What kind of fair bargaining is that? What kind of fair process is that? That's another attack on the democratic system, and whether the Liberal Government supports or does not support unions, the respect to fair bargaining - and especially, especially since this Premier promoted himself as somebody open to the fair bargaining process and then it does not happen, no wonder the public feel the way they do and feel that they've been cheated, that they haven't been told the facts.

This even brings me, Mr. Speaker, to the Ray Ivany report, One Nova Scotia. Yes, One Nova Scotia - the investment in that, the jobs, and the jobs to create the One Nova Scotia and the office and of course jobs given to Liberal supporters - you know, Mr. Ivany's wife receiving a job from the Liberal Government. (Interruptions) Well, right, we could go through a whole list, we could ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Yes, we ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. Order, please. Come to order, please. Will all members come to order, please.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. See, when you bring the facts forward the government members get very upset, it hits what you call a sore point because it's a true point, and we could go through a long list of people (Interruptions) who are ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable member for Chester-St. Margaret's has the floor.

MS. PETERSON-RAFUSE: We can go through a long list of Liberal supporters who have received employment through this Premier, and they cannot deny it because it's factual. But it hits a sore point because it's called patronage, and it happened the last time the Liberal Government was in - and it hasn't changed. It's the same.

But, we talked about One Nova Scotia - we don't have one Nova Scotia under this government because the way it is being managed is conquer and divide. You know we've seen this with the teachers' issue - we've seen the fact that the government tried to put a wedge between the union and the teachers. Well, when that wasn't working, then it was let's put a wedge between parents and students and teachers. And that didn't work, so let's now go to the general public and let's talk about how well the teachers get paid and let's talk about all the benefits they receive. But no discussion about the working conditions, not informing Nova Scotians of the difficult jobs that teachers have, and the hours of volunteer work that teachers put in in order to make our system work and what they give for our students.

Our teachers should be respected at the highest level that we can respect a profession, because from our teachers we have lawyers, we have engineers, we have doctors - it is their teaching that inspires many of those students to take the next step in their education in their life.

There are countries in this world that truly respect what the teachers offer their society. It's unfortunate because this process did not show that respect from our government. When you have to start talking about trying to put a wedge between different organizations, that's not what One Nova Scotia was about and this Premier said he was embracing One Nova Scotia. Well, rural Nova Scotia is dying under this government,

completely dying, and now we've dealt with nurses and we've dealt with home care workers - all attacking rural Nova Scotia, attacking many women, attacking professions, and trying to put a divide. I do not think that was what One Nova Scotia is about.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the government can voice their upset, that's fine, but I'm talking about things that are factual. You can go and look them up in the news, you can google them, you can find out who is working where and who they are. If you want to take the time to do that you will see that exactly what I have said is factual, it's not made up. They're not made-up people and their connections to each other and their connections to the government are not made up either.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about the democratic process and the fact that we're seeing this being eroded quickly under this government. I've talked about the fact that the government has the power and the ability to do something right away and not put it off for a couple of months and then a couple more months, to try to get through an election period which certainly we will see is part of this strategy. I've talked about the schools and the working conditions, and I'm sure I just touched on those working conditions. I'm sure there's much more that could be spoken about with what teachers deal with and the number of students that are in their class. If you're going to do a class cap, do a real class cap. Don't do what was done under this government, that when you had an overflow you would then have another class and have a split class.

I heard from teachers over and over about that. The images we have of control over capped classes and numbers, but yet that's not factual either because then teachers are given the challenge of teaching split classes, just to make sure that it looks - the facade is that we are in control of the number of students in our class. If this government would take half of its time to deal with those issues rather than figuring the strategies around messaging, maybe we would see things getting done.

I don't think that's going to happen. I think that when the vote happens we're certainly going to see what has happened in the past, that many or most of them on the government side will vote with their Party rather than with their conscience - or what I have seen a lot of, trying to justify that Bill No. 75's not that bad, when it is.

But I guess that's what we do as humans, even when we don't support something wholeheartedly. We have to pull out those things that we think justify it. When you're doing that - when members are doing that - I hope they really understand the control and the power that they have in affecting people's lives. We have 9,300 teachers whose lives will be affected, their students will be affected, and parents will be affected. The members have been given the privilege of sitting in this House to represent those people who voted them in. Not their Party, but the people who voted them in.

I can stand here and say this, because I'm an example of that. All governments do good and all governments make mistakes. I find it ironic how much the Premier points his

finger at the NDP, as if, “Well, if we make the same mistake as you did, that’s fine, because you made it first.” That’s what I hear all the time: “You guys did this, and that was wrong, so it’s all right for us to do it.” That’s not what it’s about. You should learn from other people’s lessons, but obviously this government doesn’t want to.

The lesson will be learned, and at the end of the day, the lesson for the Liberal Government will be taught by the teachers of Nova Scotia. They will teach you the lesson in the next election, and there will be people on that side who will not be in government and will not be sitting in this House because of the lesson that the teachers of Nova Scotia and the students and the parents will teach the Liberal Government in the next election.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: Just before we get down to business, I do want to take this opportunity, because I believe my son’s class may be watching - I want to give a shout-out to my son, who turns 15 today. (Applause)

I would not be here if it wasn’t for a teacher when I was 17 - my Grade 12 history and math teacher, Allan Gordon from Pictou West. I was reminded of him the other day, as we’re planning our 30-year reunion. In my yearbook that year, he wrote in the front of the book, “Karla, your grades were a little bit lower than you had expected, but only because of your involvement in wanting to keep everything running at this school. Thirty years from now you will look back and you will wonder why you worried so much.” Well, sadly, I still worry. I probably worry more than ever for the education system here in Nova Scotia.

This much I know is true: the Liberal Government has absolutely failed miserably to adhere to the basic principles of good governance, which is responsible, respectful, honest, and representative of the people who voted them in. If I had to grade them, I’d have to give them an F. Not only has this Liberal Government failed with the infamous Bill No. 75, but as well, they have failed Nova Scotians with the Film Tax Credit, the Yarmouth ferry, *Bluenose II*, health care, and the lack of recruiting and retaining doctors.

The most recent failure was their arrogance in cutting off presenters for Law Amendments Committee. Their decision to do this, Mr. Speaker, negates the whole purpose of that committee. I realize that all other provinces do not have this committee. In fact, as people were being turned away, I had many MLAs from across the aisle here say, well, no other province has Law Amendments Committee. What’s so big about it, what’s the big deal? It is big. That’s what makes Nova Scotia unique - we give people a choice to come in here and voice their opinions. But we turned hundreds away, and shame on this government for doing that.

We want people to know that we care and by allowing them to have their voice and opinions addressed here in this House makes them feel that they are worthy and I am afraid

that there will be very real and devastating and costly consequences for the Liberal Government for that action in there.

I have tons and tons of people that didn't make it, tons that have sent me letters upon letters. Many of my constituents, and I'm sure there are other MLAs in here that have many, many constituents too that were not able to present. I take great pride in this position, I'm very, very proud to be the MLA for Pictou West. I look forward to the next election; I will go into it the same way I went into it this time - accepting defeat, accepting victory. I'll go straight forward and what will be will be. But this experience has really let me down as a parent, as a family member to many teachers and I really, truly believe we have let down all Nova Scotians with Bill No. 75. We here in this Chamber should lead by example. We should motivate, we should inspire, we should mentor, we should coach and show that together we have a collective vision by working together as a team. I always say to my children that the best teams are horizontal, but we did not show that to Nova Scotians.

Nothing affects school boards or school districts anywhere in this province more than its ability to create and execute a strategic plan. That takes time, that takes teamwork, and that takes the opportunity to listen to everyone, which we did not do. A good strategic plan can improve student outcomes, keep great teachers, enhance the reputation of district leadership, and retain those good leaders. However, failure in strategic planning really can be catastrophic. This is what we have here today, a failed plan, but a plan that should have been able to get everyone on the same page. You only have to be harmonious on one thing to build from there, to build from the foundation. We did not do that. We did not include everyone. We did not listen.

Engaging the community early in a process is extremely important. Gaining insight, engaging community preference as early as possible is paramount. We know that school districts that engage early in the planning process have a much greater chance at building a successful and community-supported future in education and engaging early and engaging often is really the mantra of successful, collaborative leaders. Collaborative leaders in education have long recognized the many benefits of early and frequent engagement with their constituents.

I know my team here, we've spent hours and weeks and months talking to teachers. They know, as we do, that much like early reading programs, every minute and every dime invested in gaining community support pays off tremendously. Sadly, this has not happened between the Liberal Government and I would have to say perhaps even with the Teachers Union and the community. We should look at it as a triangle and we didn't do that and, absolutely, I put the onus on the Liberal Government. They should have been the leader in engaging all of us together in a strategic plan that we could have gone forward with.

My mother always used to say to me, knowing the truth and getting justice are not the same thing. I think, as MLAs, we know what the truth is here, but we're not allowed to

speak the truth - or some of us are not allowed. There is pressure, it's like peer pressure for many. Sometimes you go and find someone you can bond with and you confess that peer pressure and you do all you can to uplift that person, to make them believe what they believe and what they are telling you is authentic. That's where integrity comes back into play, which I mentioned the other day, that's where team effort comes into play.

I love it that there are some great connections in this Chamber, some great one-on-one conversations. It's sad that when they move into a certain seat within this Chamber that positions have to change. All I can say is that it's simple - follow what you feel is right, do what is right, integrity matters. That is why, Mr. Speaker, in this eleventh hour the perception is that the struggle for control and power by both the government and the union is paramount. People feel that the government has been desensitized from the issue, that they have been insulated. Half of these letters I have here are from those who indicate that their MLAs never got back to them. It's sad because we should be able to get back to everyone, even if you disagree. It's the appreciation of your constituents who realize, do you know what? We sometimes have to agree to disagree, but not at the expense of your integrity.

I don't think everyone is going to go to sleep tonight, Mr. Speaker, I really don't. As is always the case within a power struggle, there are real victims, and in this case they are the students, they are the parents, they are the teachers - and I'll even say that we are victims, victims of our own inability to say what we really believe and want.

These are the ones usually treated as champion pawns and catered to with platitudes. Little regard has been given to their needs, expectations and desires for a system that listens and responds in kind. Mr. Speaker, they have become the helpless and powerless and forgotten part of this most important equation in this bill. Because of the neglect, indifference, and disconnection from communication and consultation with those affected most, the possibility for any kind of amicable settlement has been greatly reduced to one single choice: a majority government.

The imposition of this contract is now the only way to salvage the remainder of the school year while earning political points aimed at recovering some sense of public trust. It will take decades. We all try so hard with our constituents to gain trust again in their MLAs and politicians. It's no easy task. That said, an imposed contract does nothing - absolutely nothing - to improve the condition of education in this province. The public perception of contempt and perhaps skepticism is created by this dysfunction of both sides in the negotiating process.

I continue to go back and ask, why wouldn't we just hit pause and go back? Why aren't we sending in new fresh faces? I think you get two chances. On the third time, you should have sent new people in, new ideas. The education system needs a balanced perspective. I go back to the fact that we need more people at the table - a balanced perspective.

The education system is in disarray. It's perhaps even shattered. It's completely removed from the designed purpose and what we want for our children. I know it will take decades and deep and dedicated commitment and a tremendous amount of openness to honest work to change what has become basically a convoluted system. I can't help but feel like I've been part of this because anything I say or do is not going to change their mind. I will probably be, as I said earlier, one of those victims who go to bed tonight feeling like I have failed my constituents. I have failed the children in my constituency.

Education of intelligent, highly skilled, and knowledgeable citizens will guarantee our province a future with better quality of life, a thriving economy, and a secure future. Again, in this eleventh hour, go ahead and impose this contract. What we're witnessing is a struggle for control and power, and indifference to those most greatly affected regarding the value of productive education.

To find out what students, parents, and teachers want, it helps to ask them first. Collaborate with them. Trust in them. Believe in our collective ability to work together for a better education system. The result will be one which we can all claim ownership of and in which we have confidence and pride. I would love to be able to leave here tonight and know that together we would leave a legacy and change that path that has been navigated through this system for 122 years.

Mr. Speaker, with these thoughts and concerns, I have to object to Bill No. 75. I implore that it be withdrawn in order to afford continued negotiations of substance for a better education system.

For one time, I was actually prepared to speak for an hour, but I know that time is limited. I know there are so many more colleagues who want to speak and have so much more value to add to this discussion.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I do want to give a shout-out to a couple of teachers who mattered to me growing up. Like I said earlier, I would not be here if it wasn't for Allan Gordon, Corinne Macdonald, Bernie MacDonald, Mrs. McKara, Trudy Macdonald, Mr. Sere, Mr. Crossman, and the list goes on and on and on and on. (Interruption)

AN HON. MEMBER: Pat Dunn.

MS. MACFARLANE: Pat Dunn - he only wishes he had me as a student.
(Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask that you follow the Rules of the House.

The honourable member for Pictou West has the floor.

MS. MACFARLANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, all in all, I just want to thank all the teachers who over the years have been so good to me, believed in me when I didn't believe in me, and for all the teachers out there who have also been so kind and supportive to not only my children but the children who really, really need it. I wish I could go on a little bit more about poverty, but I am going to hold to my promise to my other colleagues that I would keep it to 40 minutes or whatever, so thank you so much.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Mr. Speaker, just before I get under way with the bill, I thought I'd first recognize that the member for Kings North is celebrating his birthday today. It's his 56th birthday. There's a lot of attention when we get into these 24-hour sessions, and I just thought I'd take a moment to thank him for being here on his birthday. (Interruption) It's the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board's birthday, too, so Happy Birthday. And he's 29 again.

Last night, a 9-year-old girl tried to get in this building and was told that she was not allowed. That was about 9:00 p.m. It turned out the rules during this, for this week of debate - they were going to allow the public in the building starting at a half-hour before the session. So, fine, those are the rules that were set. She asked that her letter that she had first wanted to give at Law Amendments Committee would be taken by a Page and just put in a mailbox. They refused; the security said no, we're not doing that. So, she stuck around until 11:00 p.m. I went out and got them from her, gave them to a Page for her. They're in the mailboxes now, so some people have them; some don't. At about 1:00 a.m., she was one of the four people still standing on the street and the one that you probably could hear or the members could hear in here saying that she wanted to speak to the Premier.

I am not going to read her entire remarks, obviously, but I just want to read a couple of quotes from her remarks. I noticed they're in a lot of mailboxes out there still. I hope that people who haven't got it will, but I'm just going to read the first and the last paragraphs.

“My name is Hailey, I am 9 Years old, and am in grade 4. Yes I am Just a kid! I enjoy playing with my friends and acting like a kid . . . But . . . I also enjoy watching CNN, and talking about politics with my grandparents and mom . . . You think that just because we are kids we don't have a clue what is going on! Heck I don't even know if you guys will actually read this.”

And I know that some have read it; some, it's sitting in a lot of mailboxes out there right now.

“But here I sit writing it anyways, in hopes someone will . . . change their minds.

So please vote no to Bill 75! Not for the teachers! Not for the Parents!! But for the children!! For the children who are being bullied and need to see public figures standing up for themselves against being bullied, and for the future of this province, this will financially ruin this province, and when I am older and I am the premier I will probably still be financially cleaning up this mess if you vote 'Yes' . . .

Hailey Varner”

And I'll table that.

She is coming again tonight in the hopes of meeting and speaking with the Premier. She is a 9-year-old girl. She can't vote; she won't be able to vote for 10 years - almost 10 years. She just wants to say to somebody that she wanted her opportunity to speak in that room, she wanted the opportunity to be able to come in here last night, and she repeatedly felt shut out. She is emblematic of something that is happening.

This is a bit of a strange process from my perspective. You know, I've been in politics 13 years, and every issue that comes along or a lot of issues that come along, you seem to feel like, oh well, that's the most you're ever going to hear from people on an issue. Here we are again and we are hearing from people. Fine, part of that is social media because it's easier to reach out to people and so forth and maybe it's easier for people to hit a button and send your message, and I get that, but I don't think there's anybody in this Chamber who can deny that we've heard from a lot of people.

People are interested in both sides. When the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development had her press conference the other week and provided a number of documents or remarks, the bill, the briefing, I posted those all on my website without any commentary with it, just saying here's the government's position. As of this morning, 6,498 downloads of those documents. So people are interested in finding out both sides of things.

At the beginning of this process there were a lot of questions asked. I thought maybe through this we would get answers. I didn't actually think that - I've been around long enough to know we weren't going to get answers from Question Period or the minister standing up and giving a speech because they would want to get this through fast. So I understood that, but I thought that from the communications people in government we would start seeing some of the questions being answered, but we haven't.

Some of those questions are things like, what does this bill hope to achieve? Yesterday we heard the same talking points as day one - we want to end work-to-rule, despite the fact that we have heard from many teachers that work-to-rule will continue

tomorrow in 9,300 different varieties. The minister has not explained how that will be resolved, and I think that's a real serious issue.

We heard yesterday, or this morning, I guess, in Question Period, the Premier claim that the union's lawyer said that a challenge wouldn't stand up in court. In fact, what he said was that if tentative agreement number three was enacted, it wouldn't hold up in court. Instead, the government has gone with legislation that, by the minister's own admission, is a hybrid of different things and that's a bit different. Maybe it will hold up in court, but we know there's a challenge because they've already announced it, and today two parents have announced that they are launching their own challenge against the government for not implementing some of the classroom recommendations in the Freeman report three years ago.

How much are all these cumulative challenges going to cost? I think that's a question we really need to begin looking at, because you can win the battle and still ultimately lose the war. Great, that won't show up on a budget for a few years and it can come out of one of the accounts that is set aside for all these sorts of legal fights - but that doesn't make it right. This money that could have been going into classrooms could have addressed that.

Yesterday there was a motion - it was this morning, I keep saying yesterday but it was early this morning - there was the amendment on the committees and somebody asked me and said oh, why did you vote against the amendment? I said because in principle I'm against the idea of setting up additional committees because I think we've already had the committees. In fact, those who weren't here the other day can go back and read my remarks where I quoted - and I'm going to quote another couple of parts of it - from the Freeman report where they said that there is an urgent need to address certain issues in the classroom, that they are critical.

Now in this bill the exact same list of issues is repeated. This wouldn't be the second time they've been looked at, they were looked at before, under the previous government, and largely not looked at.

As many members are probably aware, because I suspect this is happening not just in Cole Harbour and Dartmouth, there are many high schools that have children going to the Vimy Ridge this year for the Vimy 100 Celebration. A teacher by the name of Danielle Skinner had to write an educational philosophy about what is happening in the way that she sees education. She wrote:

“An important factor in the success of taking VIMY Ridge came from involving those at the battle front in the planning - everyone that was part of the fight was aware of the full strategy and goal. Everyone had the same vision of what was on the line, and they were all united and inspired to fight for Canada.

In my opinion that is not happening at the provincial level of educational leadership in Nova Scotia. Leaders at many levels are failing to unite and inspire their troops. Leadership from Education and Early Childhood Development is not happening because they are not listening to what is happening 'at the front'. They are too far removed from the battle to make an effective, efficient plan. Real leaders can not be primarily concerned with political and fiscal gains, they must be concerned primarily with the well-being of their troops. That's what will. . ." make them work harder and be successful. "Without real leaders we would not have gone over that Ridge and won hill 145. Without real leaders, how will our students feel their sense of belonging and pride in Canada. If we don't fight for them now, why will they fight for us in the future?"

That was written before this bill was introduced. This wasn't written as a submission to the Law Amendments Committee, this was written as part of an application associated with some of the training for the Vimy program. This isn't new.

We heard the other day - we've heard repeatedly - that there were three contract offers and two executives, and there are all kinds of versions out there now of that, but education is a strange thing because if you look in British Columbia and Ontario, it took five and six contract offers to finally get to a resolution on that issue. If you look at the history of these - except for a couple of jurisdictions - disputes that end in walkouts and work-to-rule are not that common when it comes to public education in Canada. They tend to take longer to resolve because they only get to that point when people lose faith.

In this case, we have had a number of contract offers that the government has quite rightly said did not address classroom issues and addressed other things, but they came with the promises - and I was here for one of them - that the classroom issues would be resolved, and they weren't. Then there were committees, then there were reports, and they still didn't get resolved.

If you go back and look at the news reports and the letters that were sent during the "Kids not Cuts" debates, they are the same issues being raised then by teachers who were promised they would be dealt with outside the contract that they are raising now - the exact same issues. They haven't changed.

There's a paragraph in the Freeman report on Page 15 that says, "One area that has changed over the past 25 years is an increase in the expectations we hold for schools. Alongside the traditional roster of academic skills . . . and intellectual development . . . schools today are called upon to support students in developing a wide range of social and life skills that used to be learned at home or in the community. In many ways, schools have also become *centres of care* for students and their families. If Nova Scotians agree that these are valuable and necessary roles for our schools to play, we must also rethink the

current structure that places exclusive responsibility for schools with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We also need to ensure that teachers have the ability to focus on instruction by redirecting all available resources to support other essential programs and services.”

MR. SPEAKER: May I ask the honourable member to table both documents? You may have a few more there, but just make sure we get them to the table.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MR. YOUNGER: Absolutely, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The same document went on to say that they found that teacher workloads are too high and that paperwork and non-classroom-related expectations take time from working with students. You know what’s interesting about work-to-rule is in many classes - especially many high school classes - students are actually getting more instruction time now. I know there are things that aren’t being done - I do understand that - but they’re actually getting more hours of instruction time and more focused instruction time in the class in many cases.

So what’s going to happen? Everybody can go and read that report - the government has it on the website - so I don’t need to go and read each one of these, but one of the things that report also pointed out was this no-fail policy, which has come back and forth and the minister has said that there isn’t a no-fail policy. The other day when I asked, the minister said, well, 400 students have failed. I assume that was in one year. If that was in one year, that’s 0.33 per cent of students - that is a statistical aberration. That says that you actually do have a no-fail policy because only 400 students were held back. In fact, on the government website - I guess the minister is technically correct - there is not a no-fail policy, there is a social promotion policy. I guess that sounds more positive to say that we have to pass the students. In fact the Freeman report found that social promotion creates large gaps in fundamental skills such as reading and basic operations in math among students.

I have been trying to figure out since the beginning of this what this bill is supposed to solve. I still don’t have an answer because tomorrow this will pass - let’s say this passes tonight, work-to-rule will still continue tomorrow, it just won’t be union-directed. Many teachers have already said they are going to be doing work-to-rule; in fact in Dartmouth there are a number of groups of parents working to organize grad and prom ceremonies because a number of the teachers have said they will not be involved in participating in them if this bill passes. One entire school of 60 teachers posted just recently that they’ve all agreed that they are going to work-to-rule to the extent that they can.

The things that teachers are going to have to do again when this bill passes are really around data entry. It looks like they’ll probably have to go back to doing PowerSchool, they’ll start having to use TIENET. Listen, I don’t pretend to understand all the intricacies of PowerSchool and TIENET, I’m sure somebody else does. I think the minister has

acknowledged that there are, potentially, issues with that. But the things that you had some people complaining about are not going to change in a lot of cases, and when we come back here in the Spring session we're going to be talking about how that didn't change and how you still have those issues in the classroom.

In February 2015, the minister said that the 4,730 acts of violence in Nova Scotia schools was probably an exaggeration that had been reported in the provincial database. At the time the Teachers Union - and it was a different president at the time, it was that other executive that keeps getting referred to - said no, that is true. I hope the minister now recognizes that those stories are true.

Many of the Law Amendments Committee presenters who did get through were talking about violence in the classroom. If we had more time I have, quite literally, hundreds of pages here, many of which, not all, talk about incidents in the classroom, either stories told by teachers or stories told by parents - and a few stories from students as well. We've talked about what the solutions are over the past few days, and one of the solutions is enforcing the rules we already have. I think that would have gone a long way to build goodwill.

If you look at the Education Act, it says that "No person shall, in or upon any public school premises or school bus and in the presence of any student attending that school, use profane, threatening, abusive or improper language towards the teacher, other staff of the school board or bus driver, or speak or act in such a way as to impair the maintenance of discipline by the teacher in the school or the bus driver on the school bus." It goes on and on about all the things you can't do, and it's what we would expect - violence and anti-social behaviour. Violence and anti-social behaviour is not allowed, yet that part of the Act is not enforced. I can't find an incident in the past decade where that part of the Act has ever been enforced, and I don't understand why.

We keep talking about we're going to address this - we're going to address this, but it's already in the Act, it's just not being enforced. We have students who lack the required supports to be in the class.

I spoke the other day about how I actually believe inclusion is very important and how every student should have the right to feel safe in a learning environment and have the tools and supports they need, yet we're not giving the teachers the supports they need in those classrooms.

You've all heard the stories over the past few days about classrooms that have large numbers of IPPs recommended for EPAs but don't have the EPAs. There was an avalanche of teachers when the whole two-day thing came out and it came with a price tag, who said, "For that amount, you can hire over 100 additional EPAs."

Why didn't we do that? I understand why the two days came out. Nobody wanted them. But why wasn't there a commitment to use that money, which the government had obviously already found, to say, we will commit to hiring this many EPAs? I'd be surprised if anybody in this room disagreed that one of the issues is a lack of EPAs. We can debate how many we need, but 100 would probably just start touching the issue.

If the teachers did not want those two days, and the money allows you to use it for something else - money that the government has already decided it can afford - that would have been an immediate step that could have been done today. It could have been a commitment today for the start of the school year, but it wasn't done. What a sign of goodwill that would have been.

When we talk about what this bill is supposedly trying to solve, one of the other things that was talked about was getting teachers back to the classroom. The Premier was quoted a number of times on the radio, and he said it here this morning: the government wants to get kids back in the classroom. And there was another version: the government wants to get teachers back in the classroom.

They were only out of the classroom on one day, and that was Friday. The students were only out on two days, and one of those was because the government told them they weren't allowed to go to school. It has resulted in - and I'll put it on my pile of things to table, Mr. Speaker - quite a few humorous takes on this online. Chelsea Sherring said, "I think the bigger question is - where the heck has the Stock transportation school bus been taking my child every day? If the kids aren't in the classrooms . . . well this might be a pretty big issue . . ."

Jane Walker followed up by saying, "But honestly the real question is who are teachers teaching every day?! I'm starting to worry that there's some unknown alien invasion where they look like students ages 4-18."

When you have these talking points that are just nonsensical like that, it leads to the jokes, which is probably a good way to deal with it, but it also creates a situation where people don't have trust in anything else. There are lots of points where people can agree to disagree.

I know, because I've seen it, that there has been a lot of vitriol targeted at members in this House. I think that's unfair. I spoke at quite some length the other day, saying that I think members should be willing to explain to their constituents why they feel a certain way. You can go look at that if you want. But I also don't think it's fair when it becomes personal attacks and insults.

People are getting frustrated - and I'd much rather see them make fun of it - because some of the things that are said are just ridiculous. It's like Law Amendments - the Law Amendments talking point must have come out before everybody signed up, because the

talking point is that the Opposition didn't allow there to be two concurrent committees. That would've been a really good talking point, had the two committees even been able to hear from all those people, but it turned out that so many people signed up, in addition to people whose names they stopped taking - Hailey being one of them - that even two committees wouldn't have dealt with them all.

So the talking point is ridiculous, because everybody wouldn't have been heard even under the government's plan - and I might add that the NDP caucus would have been put under considerable strain over that time, because it would have had all their members sitting there all the time, pretty much.

CBC, thankfully - and the government supported it, so that's good - live-streamed Law Amendments Committee so people could see it. We're going to have two streams going on? But then on top of that, what they forget in that talking point is that we had the government move a motion at the beginning of Law Amendments, pretty well before hearing from anybody, that the bill was approved and sent back at 8 p.m. The bill was approved before hearing from a single person, which kind of undermines the whole point of Law Amendments Committee.

Yes, as my colleague before me said, Law Amendments Committee doesn't exist in other provinces. That is true and not true. It doesn't exist automatically for every bill in other provinces, but there are lots of bills that go to public committees. In fact, in Parliament, a heck of a lot, if not all, get referred to different committees to hear from members of the public. It is a different system, and I get it's a different system. But we're either going to have it or we're not.

Listen, I have no problem if we're going to limit people to five minutes or things like that. That's fine. People don't like that sometimes, but that strikes me as a reasonable limit. But I can remember we sat here for a long time on the Film Tax Credit listening to people. Why did we decide we had to do that in the Financial Measures Act?

Counsel up the street isn't allowed to limit the time. In fact, they would need the permission of the Legislature and a change in the Act to do that. I remember public hearings up there going on for days, and they were limited to five minutes.

We have a situation where, at the beginning of this process, there were a lot of questions. There was a misnomer that you had to have an emergency to call in the Legislature. You don't. If you read the rules, it says the public interest. Quite frankly, while I don't think this bill is necessary, it's pretty hard to argue that there isn't a public interest in education and teachers at the moment. So fine, we're here.

But then we have the Law Amendments Committee cut off. We have 24-hour sessions. We have Question Period at one in the morning every day.

Just before Christmas, I was with a United Nations group in the demilitarized zone in Korea. I was thinking about this this morning. We would go into the demilitarized zone, and there's a train station there. You could hear birds, but you could also hear them blaring music at one another. The South Koreans blare music across part of it. It's K-pop. The North Koreans blast this stuff back. It's just this psychological warfare, and it's really weird to be in the middle of. (Interruption)

Yes, the Minister of Justice has been there.

It's really weird. It's surreal. This morning I was thinking about it because we could hear outside, the sounds getting blasted. That's one side.

Then the government is going 24 hours to try to wear people out. Why is that even necessary? The only reason we had a walk-out the other day was because of this bill. So the bill wasn't to prevent a walk-out. Let's say we had more normal hours, and this bill had passed this coming Friday, just for the sake of argument. Would that have made a difference?

What has happened is, we've made a whole lot of people angry who might not have otherwise been angry. I've heard from people who were supportive of the bill, or didn't have a problem with the bill at the very least, but then this whole Law Amendments Committee thing came up, and they're mad at the government over that. They don't really even care about the bill, but they're mad about this issue, now. You've created a whole other group of people who are mad.

At a time when tensions are so high over this, I fail to understand that. I just don't think there was a great explanation as to why this bill was needed in the first place and what it was going to solve.

It's undoubtedly, as I said at the beginning, going to cost money because, win or lose, you're going to have court cases. Now you have the parents who are trying to organize a class action over the lack of implementation around some of the other issues around classroom integration and class caps and so forth.

It has now heightened the public's awareness, probably for the better, of the issues in the classroom. That's probably good. We're having a public discussion about classroom issues. I can't say that's a bad thing.

But it has also heightened awareness that the government has had study after study after study telling it what to do, some of which have involved a lot of teachers, a lot of students, and a lot of parents, and have gone unanswered. I will agree, as has been said, this government did not create this problem. That is true. This has come over decades. I think it's unfair to say you created it, but when you get elected to government, you take on the role of taking the responsibility to fix things.

We are, what, three and a half years in? The report that said what had to be done urgently was provided to government in year one. The only recommendation in there that appears to have been partially implemented was around curriculum and to start to change the curriculum, and I say partially - the Minister of Justice mentioned class caps and there were some elementary class caps but the recommendation in the Freeman report was for class caps across the board. But, in fairness, that's right, because I think it is important we deal with real facts here and give credit where credit is due.

My concern is that the real issues like how you deal with students, how you deal with violence in the classroom, and violence that somehow - you know, this got torqued out of control the past few days where there was this impression that violence is only caused by students with special needs. That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard of. The incidents happen with anybody. They don't even have to be on an IPP; they're not related. There's violence in the classroom, period.

There are mental health issues in the classroom, and teachers are on the front line of that. We need to give them the support to deal with that, and one of the reasons we're hearing from so many parents on this is because they're seeing it. It's impacting their kids, and not everybody can afford to go out and get the supports their children need to resolve those issues.

It was pointed out by me on the first day that I spoke, and it has been pointed out again by others, that the commitment in 2013 was that education would not be treated like a budget line item and yet, every talking point has been - including up the street at the World Trade and Convention Centre - that education is a line item in the budget and we need to get our fiscal house in order.

Well, it's all about choices. You ask lots of people out on the street and they will say well you should spend money on this and not on this and everybody is going to have a different idea, but a huge part of the 2013 election was won and lost on the education commitment and that was the education commitment that it would not be a line item; this would not be the financial battle. That was in the platform as the headline for the education section, and that's got to be addressed. I think there has to be a reckoning when we look at this and say if the teachers don't want the committees - and they're pretty clear, I might add, about what is necessary - then why can't we do those things?

Listen, there are things that cost money and there are things that don't have to cost money. I want to talk about a couple of things that either don't cost money or are just, we're not following the law. As a province, it shocks me that we're not going to follow the law. One of them is we have sports teams, and this has been a big thing in the work-to-rule. We have sports teams like hockey teams and so forth that always, for insurance reasons I am told, have to have a teacher monitor present. Now, I have spoken to a number of schools where there is a parent or a volunteer coach for the team, an assistant coach, but in order for that to be accredited with the school, a teacher has to be present and assigned; they have

to be present for the practices. They sit in the - some are obviously coaches as well - but some that are not sit in the stands and watch the practice or are there.

That takes time, and that's an additional commitment that I'm sure they don't mind doing, but it's something we could easily solve. Somebody in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development can figure out the insurance policy, especially since the province is self-insured, to address that issue and we've suddenly saved some time, the kids have their teams back without having to worry about putting pressure on teachers to have to be there, otherwise the kids won't have their team, and we've now saved them some time. There's nothing wrong with that. We can do that.

We can do things like when we implement curriculum ensuring they have the resources. A couple of years ago, when the curriculum for the Grade 9 geography was done, the new curriculum was rolled out; the resource guide which was promised to support students had still not arrived. Two years later, two years after the curriculum was implemented, the resource guide has not arrived. So, teachers have to sort of make it up. How is that fair? It doesn't make any sense.

As we look at this and we look at where we're going to go with this, there's a committee that's going to be appointed, and it's going to be reported back but there is no confidence that it will have any more success in having things implemented than any other committee. I think that's something that ultimately is going to have to be answered.

Among the things I wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, is there are a number of students who have sent notes, or young children sent notes. Robert Macisaac who is age seven, and I started with some things that children passed on and I wanted to sort of get towards the end here with just again going back to students because that's what they say, they say it's about the students. Robert Macisaac, age seven who is in Grade 2 wrote me and said, "My teachers love me and they know what's best for me! They only want me to be good and do good, but the government people are being mean and trying to take their rights away, and it makes me sad."

David MacIsaac, who is in Primary, said "I have ADHD and Mrs. Conrad . . ." - I assume it is his teacher - ". . . helps me all by herself. I love her for helping me. The government was so mean to Mrs. Conrad, they made her cry, and that made me cry."

Hailey Labrador, Grade 9, said "My teachers teach me a lot. They have helped me understand many different things, one being standing up for what is right . . ."

The kids know what's going on; they know there's something wrong. This bill passes tonight, somebody walks up to the Lieutenant Governor's office and he signs it into law, but I don't think anything changes on the ground tomorrow in any meaningful way - PowerSchool gets used a bit more, attendance is probably put online again rather than by

hand. I don't see a lot changing because I am seeing more and more teachers talk about what they will and will not do if this bill passes.

I read the other day - and I was just looking to see if I could find it here to read it again in closing - the other day I read a statement by a teacher, Aaron Peck, who is a high school teacher. Actually Aaron was taken into hospital the other night for surgery, after being here at the rally. It had nothing to do with the rally, and I know we all hope that he is doing much better and recovering. He talked about the things, had he been able to be in the classroom and not be in hospital, that tomorrow he would not be doing. They included not being involved in the grads anymore, not being involved in committees, not participating in extracurricular activities, not providing extra help at lunchtimes and all that sort of stuff. That's his protest - it's not that he doesn't want to do those things, it's his protest.

Mr. Speaker, I could sit here and go through this stack of paper on my desk and pull out dozens of letters from teachers saying the same thing. To me that is why I can't support this legislation because I not only don't think it solves any problem, I think we are in line for making the problem worse; I think we are in line for creating a situation. After having talked to many people and travelled to many parts of the province over the past couple of months talking to people about this issue, I am absolutely convinced that tomorrow things don't get better with this legislation and that this sets up a long-term conflict between teachers and parents and the government. I don't think that is good for anybody and, most of all, I don't think that is good for students.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I'd like to remind the member to table his stack of documents that he referred to during his intervention.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MS. MARIAN MANCINI: Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak against the passing of Bill No. 75. In doing so, I think it's appropriate to make a comment about the Nova Scotia teachers in general. From my own appreciation, I would like to extend my thanks to them - they are listening here today - for stepping up and giving voice to what is happening to our public education system and to what is wrong with Bill No. 75.

They took a step, and it was definitely not a light step. They took us on a journey with this. It was certainly not the way they wanted to see the journey end, and not the way most of us wanted to see it end, at least most of it. I use my experience of people I have been in touch with throughout this process. They were, initially and I think historically, probably reluctant warriors. I'm adopting a little bit my friend from Dartmouth East's battle analogy here, but the teachers did step into a battle. They did it reluctantly, but I would say

that they eventually became very brave and very fearless warriors in the battle that did take place.

They caused Nova Scotians to give pause. Those of us who no longer have children in the system, who have long stopped thinking about it or worrying about it or even caring about public education, they have provided us with some pretty solid instruction. In that battle, they brought allies. They brought Nova Scotia Parents for Teachers, who have been a relentless and strong voice.

I would really like to comment on one parent in particular, Cheryl Crocker, who is the Chair of the PTA at Alderney School in Dartmouth South. When I first met Cheryl, I was just out for a walk in my neighbourhood, and I came across her three boys, who had a lemonade stand. They were selling lemonade and cookies, and I just loved the idea of it. When you see that in your neighbourhood, it makes it feel like a really wonderful neighbourhood. I stopped to have a chat with them. The boys told me they were using the funds for their school. It was in the summertime, so school would not necessarily have been on their horizon, but they were fundraising.

I met their mom, and I congratulated Cheryl not only on her commitment to her school but also to the great example she was setting for her children. And I met her again when I dropped in for a visit just before we were called back to the Legislature in December. She was creating survival kits for the teachers who were going to be alone in their classrooms without their students.

I also would like to thank the parents at Southdale who continued in their fundraising efforts for the new school and playground. They experienced many little challenges, like not being able to put the notice of Pizza Day in the kids' school bags, that sort of thing. That's a \$1,500 fundraiser for them, and they lost a lot on that. It was the same with sending the notices for their Christmas Tree fundraising. But they remain supportive of the teachers. That was always something I sought to inquire about as to their position. In spite of their volunteer work becoming more challenging, they saw the bigger picture. I want to thank the many parents who sent emails and used social media to bring their concerns to our attention, to my attention.

The teachers also brought the students into their battle. I would like to mention Manuel Moncayo-Adams, a student at Dartmouth High; and Kenzi Donnelly, a student at Prince Andrew High. They stepped up to organize marches and rallies. In a letter to all of us, which we all received, and I will table a copy of that, Kenzi stated "The reason we have been advocating for nearly our entire senior year thus far is because despite different schools, experiences, and not even knowing each other before any of this, Manuel and I came together alongside thousands of other students, parents, and teachers because we share the same perspective." That perspective is that what is currently in place is not working and there needs to be some serious improvements made to Nova Scotia education system. Simple statement but a very loaded one.

So the teachers had many allies, but they were always the ones out front - they were in the front line in the battle and they knew they were not just fighting for the integrity of their profession but they were fighting for their students as well. And I found that consistent with all of the conversations, meetings, and letters and emails that I received. Teachers were always most emphatic about their concern for their students, and the concern that any of their actions on work-to-rule would have on their students, and a desire to minimize that as much as possible.

So I would have to say that teachers, as they always do, stayed steadfast to their profession, to their expertise, and they instructed. They instructed all of us - they instructed the public, they instructed all of us here in the Legislature. And to do that they utilized social media very effectively - they sent email after email to each and every one of us, and collectively to all of us; they spoke out loudly and clearly that the public education system in Nova Scotia is broken. And, this is some of what we heard, and I talked about them a little bit this morning, so I won't go into it too much, but class sizes are too large. I had tabled an article this morning; I can table it again - but I'll hold onto it for a second.

Again, I had mentioned an author, Leo McKay, Jr. He stated in his article, he's a teacher of 22 years who didn't get too upset about this whole thing and didn't really weigh into it until time went by. It's an article called 11 Ways My Job Has Gotten Harder, and it's a very balanced, succinct analysis of what's happening in the schools. It's worth a read.

He stated that larger classes generally require more patience and more energy to manage - convincing 25 teenagers to focus on schoolwork is considerably easier than convincing 32. He talked about no immediate consequences for students who failed to do assignments or failed to attend class. There was discussion of adaptations, IPPs, I'm not sure if it's called - he called it PowerSchool but I hear people refer to it as power tool; and suspension policies. We heard about the lack of respect for teachers who have even said that they did not want to identify as a teacher when they're in public - that's the level of disrespect that they feel they receive from the public.

Of course, we've heard of the lack of consultation with teachers. I referred to it this morning, so I won't go into it again - but those three reports that had been prepared through the Department of Labour and Advanced Education which was *From School to Success: Clearing the Path*, and the two initiatives by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development seem to show and reflect that there was no real place for teachers to have direct and meaningful consultation, and certainly we recognize that with what I would consider to be somewhat of a fiasco with the Law Amendments Committee - and, again, those are comments talked about this morning and I won't reiterate.

All of these and many other issues have had a significant impact on the school curriculum, and very few teachers who are in the front lines, who are in the classrooms, appear to have direct involvement on how to resolve these issues. This morning, again, I referred to the hierarchy that exists that seems to have the teachers at the bottom, and I

would reiterate those comments that it exists and this hierarchy has been detrimental to public education. I would submit as well, Mr. Speaker, that this bill does nothing to address the serious issues around this lack of consultation.

So, in spite of all of the instruction the teachers have provided us - and I would be remiss if I did not mention David Zinck, Dartmouth High School teacher, who almost daily took it upon himself to walk up to the Minister of Community Services' office, in the most polite form of protest, indicating he had often had friendly conversations with the minister there. He would send us daily Facebook messages, just outlining the issues that the teachers continued to go through and furthering our education as to what is happening in the school system.

In spite of all this instruction, the teachers were unable to get the province to comprehend. I'm no education expert, but I'm curious as to how an expert would define what the learning challenges might have been here with the government. Why was the government unable to learn and to grasp the lesson that the teachers were putting forth? What is it?

What do you call it when a government has a strong belief in something that is dead wrong? Is it narcissistic tendencies? Is it delusions of grandeur? Can the government be taught? Can the Premier, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - the Premier has repeatedly said that he has listened, but if he is listening he does not appear to be grasping the substance of what is being spoken to him.

It doesn't look hopeful. It seems that what has happened - I see it as them building a barrier. They have encased themselves. The minister and this government and more and more MLAs kept going into this thick, brick wall-encased building, and they didn't want to come out. The walls are so thick that the information that people are trying to get through to them just will not permeate.

When they went inside this wall, this type of structure, the only information, the only knowledge they had was their truth. Their truth was a simple truth, a most uncomplicated truth. They developed great expertise in this one area of knowledge. I would refer to it as Bean Counting 101. They developed the curriculum for that themselves from within the brick walls, and their mantra became, "it is not within our fiscal reality." They would say it over and over.

To back it up, they would use what I would think of as magic - maybe accounting magic. This is how it works: you task your accountants from all departments with showing how they can tell Nova Scotians that they are improving their lives while at the same time they are very busy cutting and cutting. Essentially, the assignment is to show on paper that you are investing and improving in Nova Scotia, when in fact you are not. You are cutting.

The way to do this is by changing the budget lines from previous years, confusing information, deleting budget lines, shifting money around, taking out big-ticket items like a convention centre, or signing deals for ferries on the eve of the fiscal year. They are tasked with making it look as complex as possible.

When the teachers say, “Well, I would like to keep my service award, I want a pay increase, I don’t want a 4.2 per cent decrease” - which I think is essentially what they are dealing with when the cost of living is factored in - when they say “I need more support in my classroom, I need to address these issues that I’ve already told you about, like psychologists, guidance counsellors for my students, I need this extra help,” they are told that it is not within our fiscal reality or the fiscal envelope.

I have to give credit where credit is due. The teachers are smarter than that. This is what they see in the blur of the document called the budget. They see millions of dollars going to support a ferry in Yarmouth. They see a 10-year contract that has the potential of costing us up to \$100 million. They also know that this ferry is being underutilized, and they know that they are being overutilized - and they are not carrying tourists. They are teaching our children.

They are seeing *Bluenose II*, and the draining of money - just another example. They are seeing schools being built where they do not need to be built. So, when the government said, we have no choice, the teachers responded correctly. They responded by saying, you are wrong; you are wrong, you are wrong. They said it three times. I’m sure the Premier has made us well aware of that.

Each time the government was told they were wrong, the teachers would try to explain and instruct, but in the end, they just could not penetrate those thick brick walls. In fact, as we know now, the teachers wound up beating their heads against that brick wall.

I don’t know. What is the message here? Does the government think that the no-fail policy in the school system applies to them? Do they think they will get a pass regardless of their actions?

Mr. Speaker, the bill that is before us today should not pass. It should not pass for many reasons. It was not a properly-negotiated contract. It should not pass because the majority of those directly affected do not support it, and it should not pass because it is an imposed contract.

I will table this document as well, but I would like to read a quote that came from the *Cape Breton Post*, from Stephen Drake, a Crown Attorney who was formerly the head of the UMW. He said:

“I have closely watched this saga unfold since the first volley was fired by the provincial government. Not much has changed since

the 1920s. Instead of soldiers and machine guns, the government is armed with television ads, social media and legislation to accomplish what they pretended to do at the collective bargaining table. Forcing a deal in the legislature is a distraction to misdirect public focus away from the government's biggest problem - **the teachers are right**. I'm standing with the teachers."

The bill should not pass because it will only add further acrimony and uncertainty to our public education system. That exists at the present time at an unprecedented level, and it will only be heightened when this bill passes.

It should not pass because it will demoralize the profession, and work-to-rule - in whatever format, as many of my colleagues have alluded to - will continue.

The bill should not pass because it will directly affect teachers' enthusiasm, which I believe is a fundamental trait in excellent teaching. Teachers bring a sense of compassion and love to their students when they are in the classroom. They are invested intellectually and emotionally in their students. I'm not sure that there is another profession like it. It is very unique.

I think it is their investment in the classrooms and to their students that has resulted in them accepting all of these policies over the years. As I said this morning, I certainly do not drop all of this in the lap of the current government, since 2013. It is a problem that has been going on for some time. But the teachers themselves - and many of them admitted that they didn't bring it forward. They just dealt with it. They tried to cope with it. Now they're not, and I'm proud of them. I'm glad. If there's anything out of this process, it is: that we have become aware of information we really don't want to have. But they've put it in our faces, and we have to acknowledge it.

Teachers I have met with have expressed their frustration at not being able to do their job, which is the fundamental thing here. They want to teach their students. A Grade 9 math teacher takes no pride in the fact that she is sending a student into Grade 10 math, which is a mandatory course, when the student didn't grasp the Grade 9 work, and it's questionable whether he grasps the Grade 8 work. Teachers want their students to succeed.

I was a teacher long ago myself, and I can remember having just graduated from the B.Ed. program. We were taught about being organized and focused when we created our lesson plan. As teachers, we were expected to develop that lesson plan. Well, it didn't take long for me to realize that what I set out to do was not the way things were going to roll out in a classroom. There were just too many unknowns. I still remember them coming in one day, and one of the kids wasn't there. I asked, where's Billy? And they said Billy got picked up for a B&E. At that time, I had no idea what a B&E was. Things have changed since then. So that was a whole thing, and it was hard to start teaching your grammar lesson

when the kids were kind of hyped up about this particular situation. You didn't know. It was always unpredictable.

What you did realize is that a lesson plan you thought you had for the day might take you three days to get through. Teachers have to react to these unpredictable issues and rise on a daily basis in the classroom. In the time I refer to, the resources were very decent in the schools that I taught in. Even at that, with the best of resources, it's a challenging job. The actual act of teaching has little to do with a lesson plan, that's what I realized, and more to do with having your eyes wide open to the needs and the dynamic of your classroom.

Teachers have given us a lot, and we as parents who had children going through the system have taken it for granted. Your kids go to a certain point where they're going to go one way or another. They're going to be achievers, or maybe they're going to opt out. We think that as parents we play a big role in that. But it's really the teacher who gets it. They're with our kids five hours a day.

We would come home and have supper with them. You would ask, how are things going? The response was, good. Do you have any homework? No. Did Mr. So-and-so say anything to you today about this or that? No. You would get that sort of response, but when you went to parent-teacher interviews, sometimes you got a completely different perspective, and you wondered if they were talking about your kid. They had a lot of knowledge and understanding of your child. The bill woefully neglects to address or even recognize the significant role teachers have in the basic fabric of our communities and in our daily lives.

This bill should not pass because of Justice Donald's decision in B.C., which was adopted by the Supreme Court of Canada. There has been plenty of discussion of that, and I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition may be retained because he did a pretty good job of setting out his legal opinion on that this morning. In assessing whether pre-legislative consultation was done in good faith, Donald stated, and this is from his decision, ". . . government always has the power to unilaterally resolve impasse through legislation . . . This is a huge power imbalance that fundamentally alters the calculus of how negotiations unfold." It's just a single quote from his decision, but I believe that there is going to be a lot of deference given to Section 2(d) of the Charter. I would think that challenging this legislation in court has good prospects. That's what I would say about that at this time.

We've already asked, why are we dragging ourselves into this, the increased costs? Then of course, whatever happens, it will roll through the courts over a number of years. This government may not be around, and it will be on the books in some other way, I guess.

The bill should not pass because the inevitable legal action, as I said, will be costly and against the public interests, the costs likely to be borne by future governments. But know this will be this government's legacy. We will remember you for this.

Mr. Speaker, the government has been told loud and clear that this is not acceptable legislation. They heard it through negotiations. They heard it through the thousands of letters and emails. They heard it at Law Amendments Committee. They heard it in the streets when thousands protested. They are hearing it again from people in the streets right at this moment. They have heard it from this side of the House. They have heard it from the Opposition.

We on this side of the House know with certainty where we stand. We stand with the teachers, we stand with the students, and we stand with the parents. We on this side of the House stand for quality public education in the Province of Nova Scotia, and we ask the Liberal Government to do the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MR. EDDIE ORRELL: I don't plan on taking a lot of time here this afternoon. I would just like to wrap up a few things that were said earlier, things that I said earlier.

I thank the 9,300 schoolteachers that we have in this province for finally standing up for what they believe is right and what they believe needs to be addressed in the classroom so that the quality of education that our children are receiving, that your children are receiving and our children's children will receive will be something we can be proud of that will prepare our children to stay in our province to make our province great again.

We've had a lot of people leave to go to work out West. We've trained a lot of people in our school systems - our public school system and our university system - and they've had to leave because there's nothing here for them. Our teachers are concerned about that, and they're standing up for that.

Mr. Speaker, we know this is about the kids in the classroom. We know that teachers aren't the greedy, non-caring individuals that they've been painted to be during this debate by some people in this Legislature. There have been stories of someone in my constituency who went on a vacation and came across someone they thought was their student. This young teacher would not continue her vacation until this child was delivered to the destination he was going to - cut her own vacation short. That's not someone who is greedy and non-caring.

The students, the teachers, and the parents wanted their say in Law Amendments Committee, and we've heard that it was our fault that they didn't have their say in Law Amendments Committee because we didn't operate a second Chamber to double the

amount of people who were seen. Doubling the amount of people would have meant 150 people. There were still 250 ready to be seen. So that's our fault.

Mr. Speaker, this is the House of the people. We represent our constituents here, and everybody in this Chamber represents them well, I hope. But that's not representing our people - denying them a say on what goes on in this Chamber and what bills get passed, their say to make sure that we understand where they are coming from as parents, teachers, and students.

I had a couple of letters dropped off to me, Mr. Speaker, in the meantime from people who could not get to Law Amendments Committee because they didn't get a return phone call, or they didn't get an appointment. One lady, a Ms. Tanya Chislett, was writing because she felt her voice just had to be heard for her family and her students. She is both a teacher and a mother:

“As you well know teachers are fighting for what's best for our students. I'd like to say that I'm pretty well versed in things political and I know that you have a voice that represents your constituents and your own perspective. I'm writing, again, to tell my story.”

Mr. Speaker, she has a daughter, named Sophie, who wants to do her best:

“. . . my Sophie does want to overcome her fear of reading aloud but sadly in a broken system that focuses much of a teacher's time on data entry or a failed inclusion model she gets lost and left behind.”

Those are the concerns of both a parent and a teacher. She goes on to say that creating more committees to attempt to resolve any issues is not what her daughter and her students need. They need help now.

“Sophie's a beautiful, blond haired, blue eyed, 9 year old girl who just wants her teacher to know she's doing her best. She deserves much more than this broken system is giving her! So in closing I ask you to think of your children, the children of this province, but most importantly think of Sophie - she needs you now!”

That's from Tanya Chislett who has a daughter and teaches at Whitney Pier Middle School - and I can table that if I have to, Mr. Speaker.

The other letter I had was from a Stacey Barrie who is a Grade 6 teacher at Dr. T. L. Sullivan Middle School in Florence, and she talked about her class sizes. She says:

“One class has 27 students on the roster. In that group of 27, there is a wide variety of learning and social needs that I must attempt to meet on a daily basis. However, I have 2 more students who come to me for math, science, and health. That brings the number to 29. Yes that’s over the cap for grade 6. Then there are three others who come to me for science and health. Yes, that puts my number to 32. Yes, that is WELL over the cap. However, those students ‘don’t count’. At least, that’s what I was told when I questioned why my class cap wasn’t being respected. You see, these kids are sent to me for ‘inclusion’.

While I care for each and every student in my classroom, the reality is that I am actually unable to TEACH all of them. You see, there is only one of me and so many of them.”

So that comes from a teacher by the name of Stacey Barrie who teaches at Dr. T. L. Sullivan Middle School in Bras d’Or.

So, this is where we stand. How did we get here? We’ve had all kinds of presentations. We had three contracts, two executives. We’ve heard that over and over and over and over. They rejected the three tentative agreements with increasing numbers each time: for the first one the government tried to ram a deal down the teachers’ throats with the threat of imposing a contract that they figure was even worse, and they said no; the second deal, they hung Bill No. 148 and an imposed contract over their heads, and even more of them said no; and on the third agreement they dangled Bill No. 148, imposed the contract, and then broke the negotiating confidence, and again they said no.

So, this is where we are today - a bad agreement, 78 per cent of the teachers rejected it, nothing in that agreement to address the classroom conditions now, things that wouldn’t have taken a lot of money to do as a good-faith bargaining tool, things that could have brought the teachers around that they would have been surely - we’ll continue our working conditions if we’ll continue to negotiate. We didn’t get that.

So, we had an amendment to the bill come from the government with help from the New Democratic Party - never came from one person in the Law Amendments Committee. We had 70-some people present there and we shut it down. They actually left a lady sitting in the chair and wouldn’t give her an opportunity to speak. Her name was Tammy Jardine and she was a teacher. Some of us in the Chamber that day sat in the chair and let that lady have her say, and another person and another person because they waited the whole day. And we hear that they’re respecting teachers, they want to hear what teachers say. The didn’t want to hear it over there, but they’re hearing it here today. I’m hearing it outside, but they’re not hearing what the teachers need in the classroom to make the conditions better for our children, our future.

I'll say one thing, Mr. Speaker. This government has done something that no other government was able to do, that I can remember, in 122 years. They had the first teachers' strike, but they have united teachers. Teachers from all over this province marched on this Legislature to demand that they get back to the bargaining table. They are not demanding what they want - they want to get to the table to negotiate that. You can't get anywhere if you're not speaking. You can't get anywhere if you walk into a bargaining table and say "this and this are not on the table" and tell me that there's fair collective bargaining going on.

I had another teacher, a retired teacher, write me a little note saying, "Please work with our teachers. Don't force them with demands that are not in the best interests of our classroom and our children."

Mr. Speaker, I've heard that. I've been at rallies, I've been in the classrooms, I've been to the schools, and I've heard what the teachers are looking for. I believe their demands aren't so far-fetched that we can't do something with the money they offered that they took off the table, with the so-called classroom conditions money, that we can't make a difference in the classroom conditions right now by hiring more teachers. I heard \$17 million on the last contract offer for the money going to be up front. How many teachers would that hire at \$45,000 a year, which I think is for an entry teacher? That's not a lot of money. A lot of teachers can be hired for that.

We want to make sure that we get the classroom supports for our children and for our teachers, and we want to make sure that people have their voices heard. We have one last-ditch effort here; we're at the so-called eleventh hour. We're going to vote on a bill that a majority government - unless some of the people who have been listening, and I know they have been listening - we went to the Law Amendments Committee, Mr. Speaker.

I've been at the Law Amendments Committee two or three times during this process and a number of times before. Not once have I seen a Cabinet Minister sitting in the Law Amendments Committee listening to what's going on. I believe that was done so that we couldn't mess up what was going on in there, that some of the Liberals that sat on that committee would listen to some of those teachers and maybe have a change of heart. We didn't allow that.

I haven't yet seen a minister over there sit on Law Amendments since I've been here. We had nothing but - I shouldn't say nothing but - we had two or three ministers show up other than ministers to sit on that committee. I think that's a shame. I'm glad that the ministers did sit in there and see what was going on. We had heard that ministers weren't allowed to sit on the committee. That has changed.

If there's anything with compassion, let's defeat this bill, get back to the bargaining table, and make sure that our teachers are heard - not just three, three, and three on a committee that we're going to study over the next little while and maybe have some

changes take place in a couple of years' time. Our teachers and our students need those changes now. Let our teachers teach and let our students learn.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

MS. LENORE ZANN: It gives me pleasure to rise again for the second time today to talk on Bill No. 75. I have to say that, as I mentioned before, I'd particularly like to speak about the flaws that I see in the bill.

This particular time I want to talk about two contentious issues - the nonexistent no-fail and attendance policies - to indicate that many MLAs may not even really understand the complexities of what we are voting on today.

After speaking to hundreds of teachers and reading thousands of their emails, and coming from a family of teachers - including a father who trained teachers at the Nova Scotia Teachers College for 30 years - it's my belief that many people don't really know what they're talking about when they make and refer to these policies, nor do they understand the impacts that these can have on students and teachers and on our greater view of the society that we want. We are entrenched in a society that is based on hierarchy, competitive individualism, and separation. This deeply affects our view of education.

I would say what we are looking at in education is a business model. That is not the right way to view something that is so important and so much more than just dollars and cents. In fact, one of my colleagues in the Teachers Union mentioned the other day that she read that one teacher putting their time and energy into the life of a child is the equivalent of about a \$250,000 investment. I find that that is very telling. Hedge fund people, how much do they really commit, how much do they really give to a child's education and a child's life? I would say probably not anywhere near \$250,000.

All you have to do is look at pay scales for teachers and in education. Look at pay scales. It's likely that Primary teachers are doing some of the most important work in education. We choose to pay administrators more than teachers, as though that work is more important. Teachers are paid on the basis of seniority and credentials, which is fair if there is equal access to those credentials. Administrators are paid by the size of their staff. Senior staff are paid more because they're higher up and so on and so on. We live and work in silos in the education system. We also live and work in silos in government. Our government operates this way.

In a society of hierarchy and competitive individualism, we have a belief that some will fail, some will pass, and some will rise to the top, the cream of the crop, and that that's okay. That's just how it is. That's just the way the system works. But that does not work in a learning environment. Indeed, it turns a learning environment into more like a sorting environment, like a conveyor belt sorting things. Do we really want to simply sort students,

or do we actually want to help them learn and grow and enjoy life and learn how to enjoy life?

Education and Early Childhood Development, Community Services, and Health and Wellness operate as though they were discrete areas unaffected by each other, rather than deeply interconnected to the lived experience of the whole person. That's why we hear that in some of the best education systems in the world, like New Zealand for instance, they look at the whole child. This is a very important aspect and perspective, I believe.

Students in that way are more than just bums in seats. They are vibrant, inquisitive, nervous, and self-conscious bodies, minds, and spirits wanting to be nurtured, wanting to be loved so that they might become their fondest image of themselves. They don't want to be sorted. They're little creatures with lots of imagination that, unfortunately, it seems the system beats out of them. We need to encourage them as much as possible.

My father taught early childhood development 40 years ago. He used to come home and tell me what he would hear people say: You've got to be tough on kids and teach them that they can fail and that if they don't work hard, they're going to fail. We've got to do this because life's going to be tough, and when they get out there, they've got to know how to deal with life because life is tough.

My dad came from a school that said, no, we need to build up the child. We need to give that child as much encouragement and find out what that child is truly interested in and try to foster that interest and that passion. He said that if you can build up the child that way, they'll be that much stronger and have more fortitude to deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that they will find as they go along in their years of life and in the job. No, children don't want to be sorted.

Even though a no-fail policy does not exist in the tacit understanding of moving students on, it's of no help to teachers or students as it is currently practised. If a student does not learn the progressions to a skill but is just shunted along, they'll never really catch up again, and they will become just another school failure. But if a child has difficulty learning progressions to a skill, then it does indicate that they need some alternate level of support immediately so that this does not become a lifelong lag in their education.

There should be a no-fail policy, and it should relate to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, to Community Services, and to Health and Wellness and their responsibility to students. This policy should mean immediate intervention, which could be anything from different ways of teaching or individual help all the way through to testing and support for learning challenges and also mental health issues. So many kids go undetected for so long. We need to find those and we need to be able to help those children. That's why we need more guidance counsellors and more psychologists in the schools from day one.

As long as we remain in our silos, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to underserve those who most need us. Education and Early Childhood Development, Community Services, and Health and Wellness all need to work together. That's why a no-fail, immediate-intervention policy is important. It teaches us where we are failing our students and that the responsibility is a collective responsibility of our education system, our health system, our community services system, and also, I would say, our society, because we want to have a healthy society. We want to have a mentally healthy society, and we want to have our children be physically and emotionally strong as well.

I have to say that, speaking to many teachers, they tell me that children these days in elementary school only get one hour per week for physical activity. That's just not enough, Mr. Speaker. Kids need to be active. They need to let out their steam. They also need to be fed. I would say that coming to school hungry, on an empty belly, and not having enough time to exercise - no wonder there are kids who are jumping out of their seats. They need to have a lot of time for play. They need to be able to run around, they need to be able to climb monkey bars, they need to be able to play imaginary games with their friends. This is the way we look at the whole child.

As well, we need to have as many arts in the schools as possible. They've already proven that music and math and sciences are related, that kids who get music in the schools are better in their math and science scores, and that drama and art are excellent ways for children to deal with their emotional life. Many kids who are traumatized from various things will not necessarily be able to talk about it, but they can draw it or paint it or sing a song about it or do a little play about it. They say that by kids involving themselves in this way, it's an extremely healing practice. We need to be doing more of this in our schools, particularly in our elementary schools and even in our junior high schools, I would say.

Regarding attendance policies, I just wanted to say that I got a letter from a constituent who said she had been coaching boys' basketball and there was a student she had coached for about four years. He had lost his dad due to cancer a few years before she started coaching him. If she had an attendance policy that was punitive towards lates and absences, then he would have learned that you have to choose between family and what you want as an individual.

She said he would have been well-educated in competitive individualism, but instead, he comes to her before practice saying: I'm going to be late because I have to go over to the rink and help my little brother dress for hockey, or I have to leave early because my sister has a sock hop at the elementary school and I have to help her get ready for it, or I can't come because my mom and grandmother are both working and I'm taking care of the kids.

This child, she said, would have enough lates and absences that he wouldn't even have been on the team if she had had a punitive attendance policy. The young man understood responsibility to himself and others, so instead of learning competitive

individualism, he learned that co-operation and compassion make for a good world where everybody wins.

This constituent was also a principal at one point in time, and she said that she had a school where they went from 55 per cent to 93 per cent of students meeting most of the outcomes in every subject over a five-year period. They did it by changing themselves through changing their attitudes, their support structures, how they approached things, and most importantly, their own assessment.

Assessment became based solely on what children knew - what they knew, not on their attendance, their behaviour, or their attitudes. The school, the teachers, and the principal made it harder for them to fail than to succeed, and that's a very interesting perspective.

Their report includes how those achievements happened, and it should be in the school accreditation records of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Indeed, their accreditors said that it should be practised across the province, because it was not difficult and it was very meaningful.

This principal feels that the system is broken the way that it is, but that there are fixes that are really not that complex.

One of the greatest moments of awareness that one teacher told me he had was when he questioned the world view, when they were working toward a greater success for all students. The child realized deep down that she always believed that some would fail and some would pass and some would get As, and that teachers believed this as well and that that was okay. But when they flipped their beliefs and saw that every child could come to that level of meeting an outcome with proper support, they realized that it's not the children who are lacking. It's the support that's lacking.

When they realize this, students become achievers, so when students don't do well on an assessment, it's better to respond from a supportive position. This teacher said that she used the assessment to improve her teaching, not to tell some students that they were failures.

This was a teacher with 27 years of experience, and as I've mentioned in this House, my mother was like that as well. When we first moved here to Nova Scotia, she taught kids who were the throwaway kids, the kids they'd given up on, the kids who - they called them failures. They called them dummies. It's so sad. They gave them a place to be schooled that was subpar, in these huts out behind the main part of the school, these trailers with no heating - really dilapidated and rundown. It's like anything, Mr. Speaker: if you don't feel that you are worthy, and that people don't respect you and you're not worthy of respect, how are you going to start behaving any differently? I imagine you're going to start acting that way, because society has already showed that they don't care about you. You're a

nobody, you're a nothing, you're not going to amount to anything. This is the kind of message that was being given to these kids.

When my mom arrived, she really took it upon herself to take the time that was needed to teach these kids some self-respect, and also to get along. There were a lot of fights that would break out, sometimes racial divides and sometimes financial divides. Some of the kids from the main school, who grew up with richer families, would get in a fight with the poorer kids. Sometimes the kids would be Black or First Nations or Acadian, and they would fight amongst each other.

My mom always said this was such a shame. It made her feel very sad. So what she would do - which she probably wouldn't be able to do today - is she took the kids horseback riding. She'd invite them to come out, and she and Dad paid for it. I was just a little kid at the time, probably 8 or 9 or 10 or 11, and I remember going out with all these teenagers to Glenholme, where they had horseback riding. The kids had never been on a horse and, as anyone who has been on a horse knows, it can be very scary. It's a big beast that you can't quite control until you actually know how to control one. That takes time.

What it did was it took them out of their ordinary, day-to-day routine, put them all in a situation where they are all in the same boat, they are all at the same level, which is learning something completely new and kind of scary but exciting. Those kids started to get along well and worked together and laughed at each other, and by the time the weeks were up, after these horseback riding weekends were over, they were all firm friends and there was no more trouble in the classroom.

I've run into a number of them as adults now, on the streets in Truro when I go to different shopping malls and events. They come up to me and they say, your mom taught me and I was one of those kids they called "the nuts in the huts" and they didn't give us a chance but I've done this with my life, or I've done that with my life. They said, if it wasn't for your mother, I wouldn't be here today.

To be honest, Mr. Speaker, this job is an important job but to be a teacher and to hear those stories, and for me to take those stories home to my mother and tell her that and to see her eyes brim with tears when she hears the difference she made in those kids' lives, my gosh, you can't change that for gold. That's what we're here fighting for today, a bill that is disrespecting teachers, it's taking away their authority, it's treating them as if they don't know any different, as if they are throwaways and that they need some stern father telling them that they've been bad and that they need this or that in order for them to be on the right track.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not okay, and that's why we hear so many teachers crying out and standing up for their rights.

When a child with OCD cannot come to school on a Tuesday because they wear brown socks on a Tuesday and when they opened their drawer the brown socks were touching the black socks and their parents could not find the other pair of brown socks because they were in the laundry - should this student be penalized by an attendance policy? To have so many people hastily voting on something that we don't fully understand, when those who do understand it are being silenced, it is really repugnant. Teachers, social workers, health care workers, they know what's needed, and if they were given the parameters within which to work, they are best suited to make these decisions.

Again, I hail back - my mother has always said that teachers know best what is needed in the classroom because they deal with it on a day-to-day basis. Things have changed so dramatically in the last 30 years, in the last 10 years, in the last five years, that how dare we try to push something on teachers when, really, they do know what's best.

So how do we truly understand the complexities of this hastily constructed bill - what are the impacts of this bill and what do they mean on the ground? Are we willing to alter our world view, from a neo-Liberal balanced budget at any cost, on the backs of anyone, to a compassionate and interconnected equitable understanding of the importance of educating our children? Can we speak intelligently about the importance of every aspect of this bill? I can't and I'm sure many of us here can't - and I'm the Education and Early Childhood Development Critic. I've been learning and listening and trying to learn as much as I can as quickly as I can over the last year, but we're not experts - but the teachers are.

Do we even understand the underlying tenets reflected in this bill and, indeed, in the whole process of arriving at this point? If not, it's important to oppose it. We know from history what happens when people just do what they're told to do. So, to the Liberal members, if this vote is whipped, I believe that they owe it to their constituents and themselves to say no, to vote no. They should not give up on their desire to work for Nova Scotians by obeying a whipped vote. I know it's hard and I know they're being pressured into doing this, but this particular issue is of crucial, vital importance.

It's quite clear that people on the other side, in the Liberal Party, will end their career if they misrepresent the position of their constituents. This is what we're hearing over and over, and over again, from people.

Asking teachers to be solely responsible for the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of students is like asking a surgeon to go into the OR while slowly withdrawing the services of the anesthesiologist, the scrub nurse, the circulating nurses, the surgical technicians, and the registered nurses. To tell teachers that we will do a two-year study to determine what is needed is like telling the surgeon, after making the incision and the critical decisions related to the surgery, that she will have to do it all herself while we study the usefulness and the need for the other OR personnel.

We know what is needed and, more specifically, who is needed to fully support students - and that is our teachers. We would not be discussing discipline, no-fail, and non-attendance if we were not marginalizing students on a daily basis by lack of support. If we truly supported every student physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, they would develop a sense of belonging. To do this we need guidance counsellors, speech pathologists, behavioural specialists, school psychologists, educational program assistants, occupational therapists, arts teachers, and other school support staff.

I would also like to say a nutritionist would be very handy in schools as well, because even as adults we don't eat properly and it would be nice to be able to help our kids get on a very healthy eating schedule from an early age - and a good physical one too. I find that when I was younger and in university I started to do that in my theatre training and that stayed with me for life - not the eating, but the exercise.

When we talk about accountability and we shift it to young people instead of looking inward at our system, we are blaming the patient for dying during the operation. When we compare student behaviours to workplace behaviours, as though in the workplace we do not get extensions for deadlines or shifts in responsibilities or that workers are not ever absent from work or, even worse, that issues like forms of harassment and marginalization have not diminished the quality of our work, then that is a problem and we need to actually look at these things in order to look at the whole child and try to figure out what is best for the whole child.

As people's rights are taken away, people lose pride in doing a good job because they're not appreciated - and that's what I'm also hearing from teachers. They're feeling completely demoralized right now. They used to wake up happy to go to school, but now, in fact, this whole process has showed them that their employer - for want of a better word, the province - does not respect them. They feel that they've been thrown under the bus many, many times by this government - and that doesn't bode well for workplace harmony.

The lack of caring about the result of how we do in our own jobs builds resentment for that person, as well as the person on the other end of the stick. That sickness, I think, spreads the disease of resentment, frustration, feeling abused, bullied, useless because of lack of respect, shutting down the good feelings that we get from helping others, and we begin to think of ourselves as a number because we are treated like a tick mark on a budget sheet. Teachers and students should not be tick marks on budget sheets and that's why this Party feels that we need to think of kids not as how we balance a budget, but in fact as a way that we improve our society.

Many speakers at the Law Amendments Committee provided an insight as to how Bill No. 75 will create a second class of citizens in Nova Scotia - of teachers and other public sector workers through the decimation of their collective bargaining rights afforded by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would like to discuss a little bit how the passage of Bill No. 75 into law also represents an egregious continuation of the neglect of another essential Charter freedom in our province over the past three decades, the right to a quality public education. I would like to remind the House that per capita spending on education in Nova Scotia once empowered our schools to offer rich and varied programming, and it met a wide range of needs. Prior to the government of John Savage, the last Liberal Government, public schools in Nova Scotia were amongst the finest in Canada and were jewels that not only reflected the actual commitment of government to the fundamental rights of our children and youth, but also investment in our communities transformed fortunes and opportunities.

However, in 1993, a series of budgets hacked hundreds of millions in funding from public education. Moves like amalgamating school boards were initiated in the name of fiscal responsibility. Fat such as music, phys. ed., fine arts, vocational education, and other world-class programs were nixed to initiate a focus on STEM subject areas.

Also at that time, they closed down the Nova Scotia Teachers College, one of the most ridiculous decisions in the history of government in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Teachers College graduated so many wonderful, caring, talented teachers, and they still lament its loss to this day. My dad, who was a professor at the Teachers College, took an early retirement package because it was offered, and he knew that the writing was on the wall. But he said, after teaching there for 25 or 30 years, that it was a political decision at the time. It had something to do with moving programs to train teachers to St. F.X., in Antigonish, which was fine, but they should have the Teachers College.

The fact is that funding for public education in Nova Scotia was once amongst the best in Canada. Now our province annually contends for the title of the most poorly funded public education system on a per capital basis, such that Nova Scotia's contemporaries in that regard include some of the most impoverished states in the United States of America.

To date, the Liberal Government's commitment to funding has involved pushing money around on a ledger page. We call it the shell game on this side of the House. Numbers like \$170 million or \$65 million bandied about in press releases might sound impressive - or the \$500 million that they say about the changes the teachers want to see happen. Suddenly \$500 million popped up out of nowhere. Those have resulted in the net loss - under this government - of over 400 full-time teaching positions since the Liberal Government took power.

EPA positions in Nova Scotia continue to fall in number under Liberal rule, as school boards are forced to reallocate funding to compensate for cuts in that area. At this moment, class sizes; backlogs in access; psycho-educational testing; and caseload sizes for speech-language pathologists, English as an additional language teachers, severe learning disability teachers, autism specialists, and many other one-on-one interventionists have ballooned to crisis levels with no end in sight on the horizon.

It strains all reason to understand how this government can justify Bill No. 75 as an immediate and sustained solution to any of the issues. Thousands of students, parents, and teachers have taken unprecedented action to bring this to the attention of the governing Liberals.

Bill No. 75 includes zero dollars in the first two years of the imposed settlement to procure additional supports needed to address learning and teaching conditions that this government openly acknowledges are complex and profound, as I've already stated. The \$20 million over the last two years, which can only be spent with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development's personal approval, breaks down to \$85 in new spending for each student in Nova Scotia per year. That's \$85 in new spending for each student in Nova Scotia per year. I'll let that sink in for a minute.

If \$85 won't pay for the cost of one week of after-school care via the EXCEL program at the neighbourhood school, how can citizens of this province expect it to result in immediate, vital changes that will buoy our most needy at-risk students? How any government can believe that public schools drowning in legitimate, overwhelming needs can be improved on a systemic level by funding that can only be disbursed in \$250,000 increments is completely baffling.

In fairness, the blame for the politically convenient neglect of our public schools rightly rests on the shoulders of all three Parties in the Legislature. That includes us in the four years that we were in power. Each has governed at some point over the past three decades and failed to bring Nova Scotia into parity with other provinces where classroom-condition articles are included in collective agreements. That very absence is one of the key reasons our public schools lag behind their counterparts in provinces where these measures are long-standing, valued features of collective agreements that hold teachers, unions, and the government accountable as key stakeholders in providing their citizens with one of our sacrosanct Canadian freedoms, a quality public education.

However, it's the Premier and his majority government that hold the power today to take the first steps towards reversing the neglect of public schools that has diminished the education of more than a generation of students. Despite the Party's agenda, this is a defining moment. Serve the interests of your Party, or make the difficult, necessary choice to fight for those who have no vote or voice, our children and our youth.

There's only one place that allows the government, the public it represents, and representation for public school teachers to do the difficult but critical work of forging a collective agreement that has the teeth and resources to make a difference today for our students, and that is the bargaining table. In the strongest terms possible, I urge everybody in this House to defeat Bill No. 75 and support a return to free and fair collective bargaining that entrenches meaningful articles that will improve classroom conditions in a collective agreement and ensures a high-quality public education for all students in Nova Scotia. With a conciliation board, mediation, and arbitration untouched for the past two years, it's plain

that several steps remain at our shared disposal to mend the broken trust, forge a new partnership, and craft an agreement that all stakeholders can stand proudly behind to help our public schools thrive again.

Mr. Speaker, I'm getting to the end of my time. I will be handing it over to my colleagues who would like to say a few words as well. I would just like to add a couple of things that I believe we need to do to change things for the better. One, put class caps in place across all grade levels, and our Party has introduced a bill that would do so if it is passed. Two, provide teachers with the supports they need to do what they do best - teach - and hire more education assistants. Three, provide better access to health care. Four, make investments to ensure all children in the province have healthy food to eat. Five, hire more teachers who specialize in special needs. Six, hire more guidance counsellors and psychologists; hire more physical education specialists; hire more movement teachers; hire more music, art, and drama teachers; hire more professional artists to come and visit schools across the province and engage our children and youth in various outlets for their energy and their storytelling abilities to give them the time they need to breathe, to be children, and to dream.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, may I be allowed to table some emails that I've just received in the last few minutes?

MR. SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg.

HON. ALFIE MACLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it's been a long few days and here we are, close to the final vote - an Act Respecting a Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of our colleagues have already spoken and they have talked about a lot of the issues on the people's minds who have been calling us - the people who wanted to appear before the Law Amendments Committee. I think it's a pretty sad day here in Nova Scotia. Here we are, the second-oldest seat of responsible government in the Commonwealth outside of Westminster, and we are here today putting a bill together that is going to take the rights away from the very people we ask to educate our children. I think one of the things members have forgotten as we go through this process is that the teachers' environment for work is also the place where our children go to learn. If that environment is improved, the benefit is for our children; it is for the young people who are going to bring our province forward as we move on.

I can't help but wonder how members of the government side will be able to go to Labour Day celebrations in September and look at people and say, look what I did, look how I squashed the rights of the worker in the Province of Nova Scotia. How can someone from Cape Breton Island go to a Davis Day celebration and hold their head up high - how can they do that?

This bill obviously tramples the rights of individuals. It has gotten bigger than just about a teachers' strike, a teachers' contract. They have decided - this government, that Premier - to make the whole democratic process unworthy. Mr. Speaker, if you had been at the Law Amendments Committee the other night, if you had seen the people who were there who wanted to make presentations - 300 Nova Scotians who were denied their rights, denied the ability to actually make a presentation in this House of Assembly, their House.

Mr. Speaker, your charge is to look after the House for the people of Nova Scotia. It does not belong to the Executive Branch, it doesn't belong to the Opposition - it belongs to the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. What have we done? We shut the switch off. We stopped listening to the people we are supposed to be here to represent.

Mr. Speaker, we've all run elections. We go around, knock on doors and you say to people that we're different, we're going to be different. Once you are fortunate enough to get elected, you have to prove to those people that you haven't changed, that you still believe in your values, that you still have principles that you want to carry on, principles like this Premier talked about when he wanted to be Premier. He told people he would have a doctor for every Nova Scotian, that he would respect the bargaining table, and he would respect individuals. We are a long way from him respecting those individuals.

When the next election comes, Mr. Speaker, we don't know what's going to happen; we never do. Things are always strange and startling, but there is one thing that I do know - the actions of this government have united 9,300 people in such a way that they are organized, they are focused, and they want to make sure that they get their message out. In elections, bad politicians are elected by good people who don't vote. I would suggest to you that in the next election, there will be a huge voter turn-out and the good people of this province will have their say.

It is a sad day in Nova Scotia. It's a sad day, because we haven't put our children first. We haven't put the people that work with our children to improve their quality of life first. We sit here and we see people that were elected by the people in their constituencies to represent them. Are they going to? Have they heard anything different? I may be living in a vacuum, but in the community that I live in and the information and the notes, the presentations - they all came from people within our province who have a real problem with what's going on.

One only needs to listen. Just listen to what's going on outside of this Chamber as we speak. Never in the history of this House have there been so many people come to

express their dismay in how their government was treating them. I would hope - I would implore - that the members of this House vote with the people they represent and not with the colour on the sleeve of their shirt.

MR. SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the debate on Bill No. 75. This bill is designed to improve the teaching and learning environment for both teachers and students in our public schools. Providing a quality education to our children is a priority for this government. We want to see all of our students succeed and reach their full potential.

As a government we have made difficult decisions to get us to a position where we can now invest in our students. During negotiations, at the Law Amendments Committee, in our offices and on the streets, we have all heard many concerns expressed by teachers about classroom conditions, their workload and the need for supports and resources.

Bill No. 75 includes an approach to improving classroom conditions that, for the first time, has classroom teachers, government and the union sitting down and working together to both inform and direct change.

The bill establishes the council to improve classroom conditions. The views of classroom teachers from elementary, middle school, junior high and senior high will be heard through the nine classroom teachers as members of the council.

Teachers will have a direct say in how the \$20 million will be invested in their classrooms over the next two years. Within 14 days of the passage of the bill, the council will be struck, with the first concerns to be addressed being the very issues we have heard during negotiations and at the Law Amendments Committee. They include, but are not limited to: data collection, classroom complexities, class sizes at all grade levels, student discipline, scope of practice for teachers, attendance policy, PowerSchool and TIENET, and more.

There is a commitment to maintain current class caps from Primary to Grade 6, and to continue to respond to class sizes in Grades 7 through 12. Class sizes have been identified by teachers as a real concern and they will also be addressed by the council.

We have heard from many teachers regarding the complexities in the classroom and in our response, the commission on inclusive education will examine the topic. There would be no one who would not agree that there are complexities and challenges in the classrooms. Our teachers face them every day, and they need our help. The models of

inclusion that best meet the needs of all students in our schools will be studied and parents will be very much a part of that conversation.

Bill No. 75 also provides a wage pattern for teachers of 3 per cent over four years. This is consistent with the pattern accepted by other employee groups, and it is something the province can afford. In addition to that 3 per cent over four years, beginning teachers will continue to receive step increases of up to 5 per cent per year. Retirement bonuses will be frozen and based on the salary a teacher makes upon retirement. The Department of Finance and Treasury Board will immediately begin work to create a program to provide employees with the option, if they so choose, to access their bonuses earlier than retirement.

Mr. Speaker, the last 15 months have been a challenging time in education in Nova Scotia. Teaching is not easy. Challenges in the classroom are very real. It is our responsibility as government to work with our teachers to ensure that our students remain a priority for both. With those few remarks, I move that Bill No. 75 do pass.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 75.

There has been a call for a recorded vote. We will ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[4:40 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. I'll remind all members to stand up with a simple "yea" or "nay."

Order, please. I would like to remind those in the gallery to remain silent as well. If I hear any other noise, we'll clear the gallery.

The Clerks will now proceed with the recorded vote on Bill No. 75.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[4:47 p.m.]

YEAS

Mr. Churchill
Ms. Bernard
Ms. Regan
Mr. Samson
Mr. McNeil
Ms. Whalen
Mr. Glavine
Mr. Delorey
Ms. Casey
Mr. MacLellan
Mr. Colwell
Mr. Horne
Mr. Stroink
Ms. Miller
Mr. Hines
Ms. Diab
Mr. Ince
Mr. Kousoulis
Mr. Furey
Mr. Farrell
Ms. Arab
Mr. Maguire
Mr. Porter
Mr. Jessome
Ms. Lohnes-Croft
Ms. Eyking
Mr. Irving
Mr. Gough
Ms. Treen
Mr. Wilton
Mr. Rankin
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Mombourquette

NAYS

Mr. MacLeod
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Baillie
Mr. d'Entremont
Mr. David Wilson
Mr. Belliveau
Ms. Zann
Ms. Peterson-Rafuse
Ms. Roberts
Ms. Mancini
Mr. Orrell
Ms. MacFarlane
Mr. Houston
Mr. MacMaster
Mr. Younger
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Lohr

THE CLERK: For, 33. Against, 17.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader. (Interruptions)

Order, please.

We will now clear the galleries. The Sergeant-at-Arms will clear the gallery.

The House will stand recessed for a few minutes while we clear the gallery.

[4:52 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:56 p.m. The House reconvened.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today.

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask that all members please rise and join me in the singing of our national anthem.

[The national anthem was sung by the members.]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker and members of the House of Assembly, I move that this General Assembly be adjourned, to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now adjourn to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We now stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 4:58 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 907**

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Michael Kabalen and Nicole Arab (Kabalen) celebrated their marriage on November 12, 2016; and

Whereas their family and friends gathered to witness them commit their relationship publicly and officially at a special church wedding ceremony, followed by a beautiful reception; and

Whereas Michael and Nicole have chosen Nova Scotia to start a new chapter in their lives together;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the couple on their wedding and wish them a life marked by many healthy and happy years.

RESOLUTION NO. 908

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas I have previously, as the MLA for Halifax Armdale, highlighted the achievements of the exemplary principal of École Chebucto Heights Elementary, Craig Myra, for the compassion and support he shows to his students, and the passion and vision he brings to his role as principal; and

Whereas Principal Myra has recently generated some well-deserved national attention, being named one of the nation's 40 outstanding principals by the Learning Partnership Canada, along with 39 other inspiring leaders in education who were chosen from across the country by parents, colleagues, and community members; and

Whereas in accepting this recognition, Craig cited the learning landscape and community garden he helped develop at William King Elementary as his proudest accomplishment, and I know personally that Craig is eager to replicate this successful project at Chebucto Heights, further helping the school to flourish;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Principal Myra on being one of only two Nova Scotians being awarded this amazing distinction in 2017.

RESOLUTION NO. 909

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the Armview Restaurant & Lounge, known to everyone in our community for its delicious food, welcoming service, and central location at the Armdale roundabout, is one of Halifax's oldest restaurants and has proudly remained a family-run business since its opening; and

Whereas last year the Armview stepped up to give back to the Halifax community by participating in Feed Nova Scotia's 8th Annual Christmas Feed, donating half of all sales on December 20th to Feed Nova Scotia, thus helping to share the holiday spirit with those who needed it most; and

Whereas this year marks 65 years in business for this fantastic local restaurant;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the restaurants that participated in the Christmas Feed initiative and congratulating the Armview's partners and their entire staff as they celebrate this impressive milestone year.

RESOLUTION NO. 910

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas in January, Sylvia Gawad and Syrian newcomers, Ahmad Alhraki, Rafaat Harb, and Alaa Alhraki, launched Piece of the East - a social enterprise centred upon "upcycling" fresh produce, that would otherwise be discarded, into tasty jams, pickled foods, pastries, and breads -at the Seaport Farmers Market after the young men were inspired by their volunteer experience at the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank; and

Whereas the new entrepreneurial venture is not only a sustainable and eco-friendly way for these newcomers to put their culinary skills to good use, but will also raise funds to help support refugees with disabilities; and

Whereas I know first-hand that their creations are delicious and I am confident that with ongoing support from Hope Blooms, Enactus, Parker Street, and Sylvia, this great initiative will flourish and make a positive impact in our city;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in wishing the Piece of the East team success with their promising new venture.

RESOLUTION NO. 911

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas last summer's Mobile Food Market pilot project brought fresh, healthy, affordable fruits and vegetables to underserved communities in HRM - including, Spryfield and Fairview -using a converted Halifax Transit bus and, given the tremendous community response to the project, the partners supporting it moved quickly to plan its evolution; and

Whereas I'm very happy to see regional council give the market's winter pilot the green light, allowing for temporary indoor markets in some communities and pre-ordered drop-and-go produce boxes in others from February to May; and

Whereas food insecurity is a significant challenge for our city and I am glad to see the market transitioning towards becoming a year-long initiative;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the Mobile Food Market's partners at the NSHA, HRM, Partners for Care, and the Ecology Action Centre, as well as Project Coordinator Julia Kemp, and Twyla Nichols, the Food First Coordinator, at the Spryfield YWCA, for the work they've put into this worthy initiative.

RESOLUTION NO. 912

By: Hon. Lena Diab (Immigration)

I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the inaugural season of the Spryfield & District Community Market was a huge success, and I am thrilled to see that not only will it return this May to the Spryfield Lions Centre but it has inspired Volunteer Market Manager Marian Munro to help launch a Prospect Communities Farmers Market this spring; and

Whereas I was able to peruse plenty of great local vendors at the closing Spryfield Market date last year, including the Unique Boutique booth run by my talented constituent, Carolyn Yorke, where I picked up a lovely winter hat and matching scarf, and the Spryfield Lions Club table where I caught up with Kay Foster-Alfred, president of MADD Cobequid and dedicated volunteer, and learned more about their coming projects for 2017; and

Whereas local markets help new entrepreneurs build relationships with their customers and provide an important venue for neighbours to bond and connect;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the volunteers that help make markets like these a reality.