

Feb. 16, 2017

Dear Premier McNeil and Minister Casey;

I felt compelled to write this letter, not because I believe it will change anything, clearly your minds are made up, but to share for future consideration when making pinnacle decisions to fix a broken education system.

I have proudly been educator in this province for 18 years. In that time I have worked for learners and families that have historically been neglected and ignored by our education system. I have met with individual families that *trust* our education system to serve their children. Families and children who, even after our *broken* system has repeatedly let them and their children down, continue to place *faith* in our education system. I consider it an honour to be a member of this profession and I take this *honour* personally and seriously. Each day I become more adamant that our children deserve an education system that *will not fail* them.

I have worked with many educators who tirelessly invest in their students' academic, social, and emotional growth and success. These individuals become emotionally invested not in their craft but in the young people who fill their classrooms each year. This is so much more than a job or even a profession for these educators, they recognize the impact that high quality, *equitable* education can have on their young learners' lives. These educators conscientiously work to create a learning atmosphere that fosters opportunities and maximizes potential for *all learners*. These educators do this important work despite the intrinsic systemic *barriers* that exist, exhaustively trying to *temporarily repair* the systemic gaps- classroom by classroom. These educators *advocate* on behalf of their learners without resolve.

I am deeply saddened with the status of our education system more so at this moment than other time during my 18 years of service. I recognize you did not create these systemic problems but at the onset of your term I had belief that your government would work *not to fail* our children any longer. It felt like your government would be an *ally* to making real change that would actually be reflected in *real* classrooms and ultimately in all our young learners' lives.

I understand you feel *celebrated* in being the government that has created partnerships and commissions; however, as someone on the front lines I feel *worried*. I am *worried* that change will only reflect pockets of individuals. I am *worried* that learners from African Nova Scotian communities will not be thoroughly and deservedly represented. I am *worried* the partnerships and commission members will not have expertise that can represent the diverse lived experiences of many of learners in communities that have been historically *underserved*. I am worried this moment will pass us by when real change could've happened for all learners and all that will remembered is this *unfortunate* series of negotiations ending in the most *undiplomatic* way imaginable.

I am *worried* you have created a situation in which you have taken away one of our nation liberties-*VOICE*.

Respectfully,

Rachel Ross Mantley