
From: Ian Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 11:34 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Cc: jamiebaillie@bellaliant.com; gary@nsndp.ca; president@nstu.ca; 'Danny Cavanagh'; jmaclean@nsgeu.ca; 'Olga Milosevich'
Subject: Copy of Our Submission on Bill 75,
Attachments: Bill 75 Law Amendments Committee Submission.docx

Hon. Diana Whalen
Chair
Law Amendments Committee
c/o Legislative Counsel Office
CIBC Building
Suite 802
1809 Barrington Street
P.O. Box 1116
Halifax NS B3J 2X1

Dear Madam Chair,

We are writing to submit our attached submission on Bill 75. Please distribute copies to all Committee members.

We called earlier this week to ask to present our submission in person, and were never advised by the Legislative Counsel Office that there would be no submissions after 8:00 p.m. on Thursday evening. We believe that any interested person or organization should be able to make a submission in person to the Law Amendments Committee and not later be told that they cannot make a presentation in person. We appreciate being able to send you a copy of our submission, but it is certainly no substitute for being able to speak in person.

We condemn this arbitrary and unwarranted interference to our democratic rights, and those of hundreds of other persons who also wanted to speak to the Committee.

We are also writing to urge that the full Hansard record and audio/videotape of these presentations be made available on the Law Amendments Committee website as soon as possible.

We are strongly opposed to Bill 75 and Bill 148, and we urge the Committee and the government to withdraw Bill 75 and to rescind Bill 148. We further urge that all interested presenters be allowed to appear before the Committee and to have their presentations recorded and publicly accessible.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Johnson and Olga Milosevich

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Halifax, N.S.
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Notes for a Submission

By

Ian Johnson and Olga Milosevich

To The

Law Amendments Committee

On

Bill 75 –

Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017)
Act

February, 2017

Thank you, Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee for this opportunity to speak to you about Bill 75 – Teachers’ Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements (2017) Act. My name is Ian Johnson, now retired after almost 40 years working in the public sector, including 20 years as a researcher/policy analyst with NSGEU. With me is my wife, Olga Milosevich who was well-known as a CBC arts and culture broadcaster for 30 years before she retired in 2012.

We are here for at least two reasons to speak to Bill 75. We were both active for a long time as union/community activists and in my case, as a union staff person. We are both parents of grown children who went through the public school system, and were active participants in our children’s education. Olga was a parent rep on the School Advisory Council at her daughter’s junior high and high school.

We are very troubled by this Bill and by what has been happening or not in our public school system. We strongly disagree with Bill 75, and call on the Committee and the government to withdraw this Bill, rescind Bill 148, and instead, return to the bargaining table to bargain in good faith with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. In fact, I wrote to the Premier and my local MLA, the Minister of Immigration on Sunday to make these requests earlier.

This Bill and the way it is being handled is exactly the same as we have seen with almost all labour legislation from this government. I am referring to Bills 30, 37, 1, 100, 148, and now, Bill 75.

In all these cases, the government unilaterally has decided to introduce this legislation without any notice or consultation, and is proceeding to ram through the legislation with 24-hour sitting days, and restrictions on the Law Amendments Committee process for participants. It is dictatorial action intended to impose the government's agenda on teachers, students, and parents as it has already done for home support workers, health care and community service workers, and for the public sector as a whole.

Despite the Premier's pre-election commitments, the government has clearly abandoned its stated support for collective bargaining and collective agreements. Making an arbitrary decision to introduce this Bill means the government has decided it knows what is best for teachers by picking and choosing what it wants in a new collective agreement. Full and free collective bargaining is out the window. It has decided the process is broken and there is no other alternative. But collective bargaining is not something to be decided by the whim of a government whenever it chooses. The teachers are the other party who are being disrespected and treated callously by this unwarranted decision of the government.

In our view, this Bill is very problematic in terms of the benefit changes it would make when it sets out clear provisions for very limited salary increases in line with the government's so-called fiscal plan, terminates the Long Service Award which was a deferred wage benefit, and prevents any possible recourse to an arbitration board or even, the Labour Board.

In our view, it is also problematic in terms of its implications for the future of public education. It fails to address the serious systemic problems which teachers, students and parents have brought forward for a long time. The deep-seated underfunding and under-resourcing of the system is not addressed by this agreement and worse still, we have heard teachers talk about a rapidly deteriorating morale which further contributes to the erosion of our public school system.

Olga would like to talk for a few minutes about what she has noticed from her years of contact and volunteer work with the system, and how the present situation is very disturbing.

Our final concern is about the impact of this Bill on collective bargaining throughout the public sector. Bill 148 had already adversely affected the overall climate for public sector bargaining. At this point, we would suggest that there will be no bargaining across the public sector and the whole process will be at an impasse. Is this a legacy for which any government would want to be remembered?

As a result, we therefore strongly recommend that:

- Bill 75 be withdrawn and any further debate on it be suspended,
- Bill 148 which is the key foundation for this Bill, be rescinded, and
- Full and free collective bargaining with NSTU start as soon as possible.

We welcome your questions and comments.