Good Evening Everyone,

For those of you who do not know me, I am Tina Cousins, President of the PGDTA, or “Union Boss” as I was called today in the newspaper. I represent 1000 members from Mackenzie, McBride, Valemount and Prince George.

We would like to Thank all of you for coming to this rally today. CUPE 3799 and 4991 and Professional Employees Association have been standing on the picket lines with us in solidarity. They have also made many sacrifices for Public Education and for that we salute you.

We would also like to Thank our community for coming out to this rally today.

I would like to mention a few regrets of individuals who were not able to attend this rally today.

From Sarah Holland,

Thank you for your invitation, unfortunately I do have a previous work commitment that I haven't managed to change. If it ends early, I'll try to come.

Please do pass along my regards to all our excellent teachers, along with my (and the DPAC exec's) best wishes for a fair, negotiated, and rapid settlement.

District Parent Advisory Council.

Sarah Holland

As well I have heard from many of our SD57 Trustees. I would like to relay a message from Sharel Warrington, Board Chair.

* I am not able to attend as the board has a previously scheduled meeting.
* In response to your challenge to the board. I couldn't agree more with your comment "The crisis in Public Education needs strong voices to speak on behalf of Public Education and the students of British Columbia" Your board is committed to continue to use our voice to as you say " ensure that government meets its responsibilities and its mandate to provide (the highest quality of) education to the children of this district".
* Over this past year we have not been silent. We have urged a return to the bargaining table. We have urged boards of education across the province to make their voices heard. We have expressed serious concern that the continuation of an impasse in this labour dispute will seriously jeopardize relationships and our students education. We have continually stressed our support for our teachers right to fairly negotiate their wages and working conditions. We completely understand and continue to press for the need for resources that meet the needs of all our students. It has always been my position that our teachers working conditions are our students learning conditions. It is critical that these learning and working conditions are addressed.
* Over the years I have valued the positive and collaborative relationship the board has developed with your executive and our teachers. This dispute must be resolved as soon as possible in order to get our students and teachers back in school. I know your board will do all within its power to press for this resolution.

Sincerely,

Sharel

Sharel Warrington, Chair

Board of Education,

 School District 57 Prince George

I would like to start my “address to this crowd” as

So, here’s the thing……….

**“The True Measure of Any Society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members” – Ghandi**

**This fight for Public Education is for our society.**

**I have 3 points I need to reiterate to you:**

**1) This BC Liberal Government have violated the rights of 41,000 citizens under the Charter. This gov’t wants us to negotiate those rights away. We can’t and we won’t. It allows oppression to exist in our province and country. We live in a democracy.**

**2) The government is responsible for the safety of its citizens. The Fire Fighters, deliver that responsibility to our communities, The Nurses and Health Specialists- deliver health care to our communities. Education- Teachers deliver that responsibility for this. This gov’t is not upholding their responsibilities. They have the responsibility to educate the Students of BC. Parents, we need you to hold this gov’t responsible for shirking its responsibility to our communities. We need you to take up this quarrel, speak out for your children and tell this gov’t they need to do their job.**

**3) We need to talk about emotions: Christy Clark in her press conference yesterday says we need to take the emotions out of this dispute. We are talking about students, your children, kindergarten children, Grade 8’s….Grade 12’s……..**

**We are talking about Teachers being in financial hardship, We are talking about a gov’t that have locked us out, and we are talking about a fight for Public Education that we can not lose. Our students are being funding $1000 less per student than the rest of the country, only PEI is less.**

**That is shameful.**

**Please take up our quarrel. Our Teachers have tried, Our School Board have tried….and now we need your help.**

**Thank you for coming to our rally.**

**Please contact your MLA, write letters to the editor, and help support the picket lines.**

**Together, we are stronger.**