

As a recent example the Province of New Brunswick signed a collective agreement in mid-April with the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2745 which represents teachers aides. The information in the agreement was made available to all union members prior to a ratification vote in late March. The Minister of Education and Cupe 2745 leadership have posed for PR pictures and released some information publicly about the agreement yet parents will not be given specifics about the agreement until after the printed versions are received from the printer and made available to all Union members, if at all.

The collective agreement in question has a direct effect on decisions being made now with respect to autistic children. Our children require detailed advanced planning for transitions. Yet, the Department of Education stubbornly refuses to release this information digitally to parents even though the provisions of prior collective agreements have been used by School Districts to justify denial of specific trained Teachers Aides to work with autistic children.

The Act currently provides procedures to help address these issues but in education the Act is too cumbersome and drawn out. Decisions have to be made now, not after 30 days of delay followed by application to either a court or the ombudsman.

New Brunswick needs an effective Privacy Commissioner/Right to Information commissioner and tribunal in order to get public servants to take right to information requests seriously. It also needs training sessions to change sectrive department cultures, such as that in the Department of Education.