



So, You're a Substitute Teacher – Things to Know

by GEORGE TUCKER

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, states, “A substitute teacher is a person who teaches a school class when the regular teacher is unavailable; e.g., because of illness, personal leave, or other reasons. Substitute teacher (usually abbreviated as “sub”) is the most commonly used phrase in the United States, Canada, India and Ireland, while supply teacher is the most commonly used term in Great Britain and the Canadian province of Ontario. Common synonyms for substitute teacher include relief teacher or casual teacher (used in Australia and New Zealand) and emergency teacher (used in some of the United States). Other terms, such as guest teacher, are also used by some schools or districts. Regional variants in terminology are common, such as the use of the term teacher on call (T.O.C.) in British Columbia.” Regardless of the term used, substitute teachers are an integral component of education systems throughout the world. Substitute teachers are certainly an important membership constituency of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA). Consequently, the NLTA provides a number of supports, as well as information, to its members who are substitute teachers to recognize their unique and challenging role. These resources include:

- **InfoSheets** found on the NLTA website (under Publications) contain a great deal of information pertinent to substitute teachers. From group insurance to pension questions (substitutes contribute to a separate pension plan), substitute teachers can access information that is relevant to them. Of particular note to substitute teachers are the following:
 - Infosheet #13: Substitute Teacher Membership and Benefits
 - Infosheet #14: Substitute Teachers and Group Insurance
- **The Provincial Collective Agreement and Labrador West Collective Agreement**, also found on the NLTA website, contain a number of articles that apply directly to substitute teachers. While all articles in the Agreement are important, Article 49

(Labrador West Article 46) is focussed entirely on substitute teachers and addresses a number of significant issues, such as access to paid sick leave, rates of pay depending on the duration of a period of substitution for the same regular teacher, rules around payment for holidays and school closure days, etc. Substitute teachers would be well advised to make themselves familiar with the topics addressed in Article 49 (Labrador West Article 46), and in the Collective Agreement in general.

- **Phone and Email:** As NLTA members, substitute teachers are entitled to access programs and services provided by the NLTA. You can contact the NLTA directly to have questions or concerns answered by an NLTA Administrative Officer (726-3223/1-800-563-3599). Staff contact information, including phone extensions and email addresses are available on the NLTA website; and, you can submit questions via the “Ask NLTA” function on the website (www.nlta.nl.ca/asknltaform/).

- **Substitute Teacher Standing Committee:** The Association has a number of standing committees that focus on different issues of importance to teachers and make recommendations to Provincial Executive, one of which is dedicated entirely to substitute teachers. This committee is currently based in St. John's and is chaired by NLTA Provincial Executive member, Chesley West. The committee has spearheaded a number of initiatives aimed at improving supports for substitute teachers, including the recent implementation, over the past couple of years, of substitute teacher information sessions held in different areas of the province. Information regarding session times/dates/location and the application process are publicized through various means when sessions are planned.

- **www.nlta.nl.ca:** The NLTA website is a wealth of information for teachers in general. For easy reference to resources of particular interest to substitute teachers, you should visit the dedicated online section at www.nlta.nl.ca/substitute-teachers/.

Substitute teachers are members of the NLTA and as such enjoy all the rights and privileges of membership. They are eligible to hold office within the Association, to be a delegate to the Biennial General Meeting and to seek advice and representation from the Association. Other topics substitutes should be aware of include:

Group Insurance

As a substitute teacher, you are eligible for coverage under the NLTA Group Insurance Plan's substitute teacher program. In order to join, you need to apply to the plan within 31 days of your first teaching day in a given school year. For substitute teachers who apply later than this, their applications will be subject to evidence of insurability. In order to maintain coverage in the following school year, you will need to have taught for at least ten days the previous year and at least one day before November 30 of the following school year. Payment of premiums must be made via bank deductions. New substitute teachers are encouraged to contact the Association after their first day of employment to discuss group insurance coverage.

Pension

All substitute teachers participate in the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan (GMPP). This plan is administered by Great West Life and the contribution rate is 5% of salary, matched by government. The GMPP is a defined contribution plan which is similar to an RRSP in that investments and earned interest determine the benefit level upon retirement. Substitute teachers who obtain replacement or permanent positions should consider transferring their GMPP service to the regular Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP), which is a defined benefit plan. Teachers in this position should contact the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation by email at memberservices@tpcnl.ca, providing their name, address and social insurance number, to request a transfer of their funds from the GMPP to the TPP.

Pay Scale

Substitute teachers are paid according to Schedule B of the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements. However, when a substitute teacher replaces the same regular teacher for four or more days, as per Clause 49.02 (Clause 46.02 in Labrador West), the substitute teacher will be paid according to the regular teacher salary scale. If a paid holiday occurs during a substitute teacher's contract

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period, the teacher will receive pay for that holiday. For teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are three paid holidays: Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day and Victoria Day. A paid holiday is considered to occur during a contract period if the substitute teacher is working on the teaching day immediately before and after the holiday.

EI Eligibility

For the purposes of Employment Insurance (EI), one full day of teaching is reported as eight hours of insurable employment. This has not changed despite recent changes to the NLESD pay stubs. The number of hours required in the qualifying period to be eligible for regular EI benefits fluctuates from 420 – 700 depending on the region and the unemployment rate in that region. The number of eligible hours is re-set each month. Special benefits (e.g., maternity, illness, parental, compassionate, etc.), require specific numbers of qualifying hours. It is important for all teachers to be aware that, under existing EI regulations, teachers are often not eligible for regular EI benefits during the non-teaching periods (Christmas and Easter breaks, July and August) except under certain exceptions. Teachers who do receive regular EI benefits during the non-teaching periods must be actively seeking work in fields of employment other than teaching during those periods. If you are in receipt of regular EI benefits during the summer based on hours of employment accumulated as a teacher, you may become ineligible for benefits once you accept a contract for a teaching position that commences in September. You must advise Service Canada immediately once you accept such a contract and Service Canada will adjudicate your specific case to decide if you qualify for EI during the summer months. For EI inquiries, contact Service Canada at 1-800-206-7218.

Sick Leave

Substitute teachers who accumulate 50 days of substitute teaching during a school year and are unable to work during a contract period due to illness are

entitled to access any paid sick leave they have accumulated. Once a teacher has 50 days of substituting service, she/he is also entitled to retroactive payment of sick leave back to their first teaching day of that school year for any days missed due to illness during a contract period. It is therefore very important for substitute teachers to maintain careful records of their teaching contracts and any days missed during a contract because of sickness. Teachers may only access sick leave they have accumulated through the formula outlined in Article 15 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 27 of the Labrador West contract). For the purpose of accessing paid sick leave, an illness-related absence is considered to have occurred during a contract period if it happened after the teacher had commenced work during that contract period.

For more detailed information on these and other substitute teacher topics, please refer to the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements, Infosheet #13 – Substitute Teacher Membership and Benefits, the NLTA Group Insurance Program, the Teachers' Guide to Employment Insurance, and the Substitute Teacher Information page, all of which can be found in the Publications section of the NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca).

If you are a substitute teacher and would like further information about the supports and resources available through your Association, please feel free to contact the NLTA. While all Administrative Officers are able to answer questions, the main contact person for substitute teachers is George Tucker, who can be reached via email at gtucker@nlta.nl.ca or via phone at 709-726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599, ext. 245.

George Tucker is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA.

Notice for Substitute Teachers

Information for Substitute Teachers is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca. Click "**Programs and Services**" and then "**Substitute Teachers**".

For any questions re substitute teacher issues please contact:

George Tucker

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