



Message from NLTA President Dean Ingram Call to Action re Substitute Teacher Shortage

June 24, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

On June 16, I updated you on efforts made by your Association to address the needs of our most vulnerable members, our substitute teachers. The NLTA is gravely concerned that the financial distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting suspension of in-school classes will result in more substitute teachers leaving the profession. In April, the Provincial Executive approved a COVID-19 Substitute Teacher Relief Fund.

Your Association has lobbied federally for changes to eligibility requirements to both the Employment Insurance Program and the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit. Provincially, we have lobbied the government for a substitute teacher employment program, which included a proposal to hire substitute teachers through the last month of the school year to assist with preparations for next year and to allow them to participate in much needed professional learning. These proposals also included provisions for substitutes to be hired on mass in the Fall to ensure adequate staffing levels to support the transition to new physical distancing expectations and other safety measures.

All members should be concerned about this problem. Any further aggravation of the substitute teacher shortage due to the financial hardship many of them are suffering, through no fault of their own, will impact school operations and potentially the availability of discretionary leaves. The NLTA is also deeply concerned that, without an adequate supply of substitute teachers, many students will face disruptions to their learning.

As a result of our growing concern, on June 16 we issued a Call-to-Action to all members, to demonstrate to our local MHAs and MPs that this is a real issue of concern for teachers. Many of you answered the call, and I thank you. We are aware that many MHAs received a high number of emails. This is the beginning.

I am asking again that all members support their Association and their substitute teacher colleagues by emphasizing their concerns to their local MHAs and MPs. If you have not already sent an email, please consider the following message:

Substitute teachers play a critical role in a properly functioning public education system. The need for the services provided by these professionals will be even more crucial to the provision of public education in the context of ongoing public health directives and guidelines, and a need for enhanced professional learning opportunities for teachers. The suspension of in-class instruction has placed all substitute teachers at financial risk and may cause many to reconsider continuing in the profession. Both levels of government have made financial provisions for specific employee groups who have been disadvantaged by the public health restrictions instituted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We all share a common interest in the smooth operation of a healthy public education system. Right now, in this moment, there is an opportunity to prevent further and potentially significant disruptions. I am asking that the provincial and federal governments take immediate action to provide supports for the financial security of substitute teachers to ensure that these essential professionals will be available to meet the needs of a healthy and highly effective public education system.

If you have sent the above message, or have in some other way advised your local MHA and MP of your concerns, please follow up with them demanding to know what action has been taken, and what they individually will do to address your concern. If you would like a standard message, please consider the following:

I have previously emailed you my concerns regarding the financial hardship the COVID-19 pandemic has caused for substitute teachers and the resulting negative impact this will have on the delivery of public education in this province. Please advise me as a constituent what actions you have taken and will take to ensure this issue is properly addressed. What are you doing to ensure that student learning is not disrupted?

It is important for all members to appreciate that, as local constituents, you can significantly influence the actions of your local politicians. If they believe that it is an issue for you, it will become an issue for them. For your benefit, the emails of all MHAs and MPs, including the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the federal cabinet representative for the province, are provided below. By taking part in this Call-to-Action you are supporting the efforts of your Association and sending the message that teachers' concerns will not be ignored.

Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Stay Safe.

Dean Ingram
NLTA President

[Members of Parliament Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
[Members of the House of Assembly Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
[May 19 2020 Correspondence to Hon Seamus O'Regan](#)
[May 4 2020 Correspondence to Hon Brian Warr](#)