



Message from NLTA President Dean Ingram Call to Action

June 16, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you are all well. I appreciate this has been a stressful time for all members as we collectively deal with the public health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to reassure members that the NLTA has been working diligently in the interests of our members and the public education system. In doing so, the Association has endeavored to work collaboratively with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) and the school districts to ensure the safety of our members, promote flexible and realistic expectations for teachers and administrators and respect for their professional judgement, and to address the financial impact of the suspension of in-school instruction on our substitute teachers, including those in part-time positions who also rely on substitute work. While constructive discussions are continuing regarding how the “new normal” will impact the delivery of K-12 public education in September, I wish to discuss in more detail the Association’s concerns regarding the impact on our substitute teachers.

Substitute teachers play a critical role in supporting a healthy and properly functioning public education system. The availability of substitutes to replace teachers and administrators who are absent from work is incredibly important, and this will be even more crucial should public health directives and guidelines continue into the next school year. In the past, when the system experienced shortages in substitute teachers, classes have often been doubled up, but that will not be an option if physical distancing requirements remain in place. Substitute teachers make professional learning opportunities possible without interruption in instruction, again an area where greater demand should be expected as we adjust to new methods of instruction.

The NLTA immediately recognized that the suspension of in-school instruction placed the economic security of our substitute teachers at risk and began lobbying, both federally and provincially, for financial assistance. Please find attached the latest correspondence outlining our continued efforts. I, along with senior Association staff, have met with the provincial representative in the federal cabinet, Minister Seamus O’Regan, and the NL Minister of Education, Brian Warr, to advocate directly on this issue. In addition, the Provincial Executive authorized the creation of the COVID-19 Substitute Relief Grant Fund to provide immediate emergency relief to substitute teachers.

Today, I am asking that all NLTA members email their local members of the provincial [House of Assembly \(MHAs\)](#) and federal [Members of Parliament \(MPs\)](#) requesting that measures be taken to ensure the financial security of substitute teachers to protect access to the essential support these teachers provide for the public education system. For guidance, I suggest 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.

Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Stay Safe.

Dean

[May 19 2020 Correspondence to Hon Seamus O'Regan](#)

[May 4 2020 Correspondence to Hon Brian Warr](#)

[Members of Parliament Newfoundland and Labrador](#)

[Members of the House of Assembly Newfoundland and Labrador](#)