

For Immediate Release

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PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM WILL FACE DISRUPTIONS IF SUBSTITUTE TEACHER SHORTAGE NOT ADDRESSED

St. John's, NL... The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) has been raising concerns both federally and provincially, since March 18th regarding the potential disruption of education if the substitute teacher shortage is not addressed immediately. If appropriate steps are not taken, the NLTA is concerned that schools may have no choice but to send children home with little or no notice, when a substitute teacher is unavailable.

"There has been a growing shortage of substitute teachers in this province over the past number of years, and COVID-19 is going to exacerbate the problem and the impact on children significantly," states Dean Ingram, President of the NLTA. "We believe that COVID-19 has created a situation which will leave many substitute teachers in financial distress, with no choice but to leave the profession, further aggravating the already concerning shortage."

When regular classroom teachers are away from their schools due to sick leave, family leave, professional development or other approved leaves, it is critical that a substitute teacher be available to maintain continuity of learning. In the past, when a substitute teacher has not been available, schools have been creative and have done their best to manage in difficult circumstances, doubling up classes in some cases to ensure that learning continues, adequate supervision is provided, and that children remained in school. "However, in the wake of a global pandemic, expected physical distancing requirements and safety concerns for all students will make this impossible," says Ingram. "In these situations, schools will likely have no choice but to send students home with little notice. If we want any chance of maintaining continuity of learning and assuring parents that schools will be open for their children, this problem must be addressed."

The NLTA has repeatedly brought these concerns to the Hon. Brian Warr, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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Please see attached May 4 letter to Hon. Brian Warr, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.