

For Immediate Release

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## **NLTA TROUBLED BY IMPACT OF STAFF SHORTAGES IN K-12 SCHOOLS**

St. John's, NL... Just over six weeks into a new school year, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is alarmed by the number and nature of issues being brought forward by members, many of which relate to inadequate human resource levels in schools and a need for meaningful recruitment and retention initiatives.

"The volume of contacts and concerns from teachers is unprecedented," says Trent Langdon, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. "I hear daily from members who are discouraged by the struggle to meet student needs in their schools. We have schools with multiple vacant teaching positions. I receive regular reports of Instructional Resource Teachers, Guidance Counsellors and others being reassigned due to lack of and/or absent student assistants. Many schools are resorting to internal coverage due to substitute teacher shortages, leading to loss of specialist supports, programs and teacher preparation time, as well as constant rescheduling. Reported payroll delays and errors are at an all time high and causing hardship. And, significant of late are concerns regarding SmartFind (the NLESD's leave management and automated substitute call-in system) – I would not say that this has been 'working very well'. All of this is troubling given the need to recruit and retain teachers in a competitive national and international context."

The NLTA has consistently brought teacher and administrator concerns regarding SmartFind forward, with the goal of working with the NLESD to see improvements made to the system. It is a complex matter that can raise different issues in urban vs. rural areas. The Association recently surveyed substitute teachers and school administrators to help inform advocacy efforts. The recent assurance that adjustments will be made to address the circumstances of part-time teachers is positive – this, and work on other SmartFind concerns is ongoing.

The Association has been calling for a comprehensive strategy to address teacher recruitment and retention in the province for some time now. Several meetings with stakeholders have taken place, the Association has made suggestions, and the Minister of Education, John Haggie, has stated publicly that this will be a priority for him. Action is needed soon to address what is becoming a crisis in some of the province's schools. "The daily reality of staff shortages, problems with SmartFind, payroll issues and, in some areas, housing challenges is having a significant impact, but not the kind we want and need to see," states President Langdon. "Teaching is demanding, but it is a rewarding profession which I recommend wholeheartedly. However, we need to acknowledge and respond to how staffing shortages and general under resourcing are affecting school operations, programming, teaching and learning, and supports for students with exceptionalities as this is often not obvious or visible to parents and families."

To view the results of the recent NLTA SmartFind surveys, please click [here](#).

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