

news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

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Child poverty impacts every classroom in Nova Scotia

NSTU President Paul Wozney says, “Nova Scotia’s rising level of child poverty is a major concern for teachers heading into this school year.” He says, “while every teacher does their best to support students living in poverty, more needs to be done to address a significant problem that has grown worse in recent years.”

This week, Children First Canada released a report listing poverty as one of the Top 10 threats to Childhood in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, between 2015 and 2017 the percentage of children living in poverty in Nova Scotia increased from 15.7 to 17.1 per cent. Nova Scotia was the only province to experience an increase during this period and currently has the highest rate of childhood poverty in the country.

“When a child is hungry; when they aren’t sure where home will be at the end of the day; when they don’t have adequate clothing; it’s very hard for them to focus on learning,” says Wozney. “The evidence is clear that on average, children living in poverty experience worse academic outcomes and are twice as likely to drop out of school. They also have a much higher chance of developing a mental health issue.”

Wozney believes the province needs to do more to tackle child poverty. He says the NSTU and its members are prepared to be active partners in this effort.

“Every teacher has a story about helping out a student whose family is struggling to make ends meet. In fact, it has become common practice for many teachers to have extra food, clothing, school supplies and even toiletries on hand for those that are without,” says Wozney. “But childhood poverty is a serious and complicated issue, and while teachers are working hard to reduce the impacts on a student-by-student basis, they can’t solve the problem. Ultimately, there needs to be a province-wide approach that government needs to take the lead on.”

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