

From the NSTU President



The most effective form of recruitment is retention

January and February can feel heavy in our schools. As teachers and specialists push through the demands of end-of-term and end-of-semester responsibilities, the workload can feel relentless. And yet, if we pause for a moment, we can notice a small but meaningful shift: each day now holds a little more sunlight than the last. It's a reminder that change, even when slow, is possible.

Across Nova Scotia, and in fact across Canada, we are facing a significant shortage of qualified and experienced teachers and teacher specialists. In response, the province has begun hiring Bachelor of Education graduates directly out of university to address recruitment challenges. Welcoming new teachers into the profession is always positive and necessary. However, this approach cannot come at the expense of the many educators who have been holding our public education system together for years. Those teachers who have worked as day-to-day substitutes and in term positions, only to be arbitrarily overlooked despite their experience and commitment.

The reality is this: we are not going to recruit our way out of this shortage.

The most effective form of recruitment is retention. We know that teachers, particularly those within their first five years, are leaving the profession at alarming rates. The reasons are clear and consistent: increasingly complex student needs, larger and

more diverse class sizes, fewer supports, and an expectation to continually do more with less. Classroom teachers are stretched thin, and the strain is taking its toll.

The same is true for our teacher specialists. Speech-Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, and other specialists are leaving the public system for the private sector, not because they lack dedication to students, but because workloads have become unrealistic and unsustainable.

Teachers and specialists have been clear about what would help them stay: manageable workloads, smaller class sizes, better access to specialist supports, and safe, respectful learning environments. These are not unreasonable asks; they are essential conditions for effective teaching and learning.

If Nova Scotia wants to recruit new teachers, the best place to start is by ensuring the teachers we have feel valued, supported, and fulfilled in their work. When students see teachers who enjoy their profession, who are passionate and supported, they see a career worth pursuing. That lived example is far more powerful than any recruitment campaign.

As the days slowly grow longer, let us also commit to building a profession where teachers can see a future, one where staying is not an act of endurance, but a choice rooted in purpose, respect, and hope.