

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

Date: March 29, 2022 **For Release:** Immediately **Contact:** Mark Laventure or Angela Murray

NSTU News Release - Budget contains positive investments for schools but also a missed opportunity

(Halifax - Kjiipuktuk, NS) The NSTU is encouraged that public education funding levels are being maintained and that an additional \$15 million is being invested to support inclusive education - something the teachers union requested in pre-budget consultations. However, NSTU President Paul Wozney says the budget also represents a lost opportunity to address deteriorating conditions inside schools that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“The substitute teacher shortage is a longstanding issue which has become entirely unsustainable during this wave of the pandemic,” says Wozney. “It is having a profound impact on teachers’ ability to properly plan and prepare lessons that meet the needs of their students. Many teachers have not had adequate prep time since December, because their days are spent moving from class to class filling in for people who are sick. Urgent investment is needed to recruit and retain teachers, including better pay for subs. Teachers are experiencing burnout right now, and many of those that can, are considering retirement.”

Wozney is also seeking clarification about whether a portion of infrastructure funding will be used to modernize and improve ventilation systems in schools across the province. While the province did invest more than \$2 million in January to provide portable HEPA filters at approximately 75 schools, poor air quality remains a pressing issue for many students and teachers. Preventing kids from getting sick, regardless of whether it is from COVID or other respiratory viruses, can only improve the quality of our education system. Similarly, the NSTU would like to see additional funding allocated to reduce class sizes and create a more healthy environment for students and their teachers, particularly in elementary schools.

“A lot has been said over the past year by this government about the importance of keeping kids in school for their emotional, social and physical wellbeing and so I’m somewhat surprised more wasn’t included in this budget to improve classroom conditions and make schools healthier and more resilient to future public health restrictions,” says Wozney. “While there are positives in this budget, given what our students have been through over the past two years, greater priority could have been demonstrated to addressing shortfalls in the P-12 system. Our kids have been through a lot recently, and we owe it to them to make sure they are getting the care and support they deserve in every classroom.”

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