October 30, 2026

An Open Letter to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development RE: Impending CUPE Strike

Dear Minister Maguire,

On behalf of Autism Nova Scotia, we are writing regarding the impending province-wide Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) strike, scheduled to begin November 2. The strike involves more than 5,500 school support workers. These workers, including early childhood educators, educational program assistants, bus drivers, custodians, and numerous other important support staff, play an essential role in ensuring each and every child in Nova Scotia has the same opportunity to access education.

The impending strike will deeply affect students and families across Nova Scotia. For students with disabilities, the loss of individualized support, disruptions to established routines, lack of accessible transportation, and inability to access safe spaces can create insurmountable barriers to learning and participation.

Every student deserves equitable access to education, the supports they need to learn, and the opportunity to belong alongside their peers. This commitment must remain a priority throughout the labour dispute and as school support workers return to work.

We call on the Government of Nova Scotia, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and education partners to work collaboratively with CUPE, families, and community organizations to address the anticipated impact on students. This includes prioritizing continued school attendance for students with disabilities, working collaboratively with families to identify practical solutions when essential supports are disrupted, and ensuring that contingency plans actively address barriers to students' participation in school. Clear and timely communication with families must accompany these efforts.

We respectfully ask that the Department work with education partners to prioritize solutions that allow students with disabilities to remain in school, rather than requiring them to stay home because their usual supports are unavailable.

Our most vulnerable students risk bearing the brunt of these labour disagreements, and that is not acceptable. Let alone the fear and helplessness disabled children and their families have had to feel following years of being in and out of strike talks and actions.

School support workers are an essential part of school communities. Their contributions to students' learning, participation, and well-being must be recognized, alongside the challenges this disruption will create for workers, students, and families. A response grounded in respect, collaboration, and inclusion must consider the needs and perspectives of everyone affected.

Autism Nova Scotia welcomes the opportunity to work with government, CUPE, families, and education partners to identify practical approaches that reduce barriers and help ensure Autistic students and students with disabilities receive the supports they need throughout this labour dispute.

Students with disabilities must not be overlooked in decisions that affect their education. We stand with school support workers, Autistic students, students with disabilities, and their families, and urge a collaborative response that protects every student's opportunity to learn, participate, and belong.

Sincerely,



Vicki Harvey
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Autism Nova Scotia