



Media Statement – April 17, 2023

Autism Nova Scotia Concerned about Potential CUPE School Support Workers Strike

HALIFAX – With thousands of school support workers as part of CUPE's Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions in a position to strike on Friday, Autism Nova Scotia is concerned the needs of students will be forgotten, including autistic students being left without supports in the school system.

“We are deeply concerned for Autistic students and students with disabilities who require specific supports, who will be left without options if a strike takes place,” said Cynthia Carroll, Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia, “All students deserve equal access to education, it’s a human right. Without a proper contingency plan in place, autistic and students with disabilities will once again be left behind.”

Autistic students and their families often rely on one-on-one support from educational support assistants and early childhood educators, not to mention several other school support staff.

The inclusive education policy, which has been in place for three years, is not being applied in every classroom, and the corresponding support gap often falls solely with the student support worker, in many cases educational support assistants.

“Autistic students and students with disabilities may be asked to stay at home while the strike is going on,” said Cynthia Carroll, “and that’s simply not acceptable”.

Autism Nova Scotia hopes that an agreement will be reached in advance of a strike, however if an agreement cannot be reached, a contingency plan that does not single out students with disabilities or autism and ensures they have equal access to education during this time is essential.

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About Autism Nova Scotia:

Autism Nova Scotia is a community-based organization that builds understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for Autistics/individuals on the autism spectrum and their families through leadership, advocacy, education, training, and programming across the lifespan. Autism Nova Scotia was founded in 2002 by Joan and Jack Craig, parents of an adult son with autism.

Autism Nova Scotia delivers programming in Halifax and across Nova Scotia through our 10 Regional Autism Centres. Our programs and services include Early Years, Social & Community Inclusion; Mental Health & Wellness; Post Secondary & Employment Support; Community Engagement; and Family & Caregiver Support.

To learn more, visit our website: www.autismnovascotia.ca