



May 12, 2023

Honourable Becky Druhan
Minister
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
P.O. Box 578
Halifax, NS B3J 2S9

Dear Minister Druhan,

I am writing on behalf of the Halifax NS Down Syndrome Society to express concern over the state of negotiations between the Halifax Regional Centre for Education and CUPE 5047.

While we are aware these kinds of negotiations can be complex, it is important to keep in mind the students who are caught in the middle of what is a very adult dispute. The HNSDSS is particularly concerned with the impact of the strike on students with Down syndrome and their families.

Many students with Down syndrome require 100 per cent EPA support and have been told to stay home for the duration of the strike. This is a clear violation of their right to an education, and it runs contrary to both Article 24 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to the commitments made in the province's own 2020 Inclusive Education Policy.

The HNSDSS and its members are keenly aware of the vital role support workers play in the education of children with disabilities; they are an integral part of our children's school experience. The longer this strike continues, the more detrimental will be the effects on the children with Down syndrome and other disabilities who are being denied access to their education.

We therefore urge the Department of Education and the HRCE to respect the collective bargaining process, get back to the table and end this strike with a fair contract that meets the needs of the EPAs and other support workers who are so pivotal to the academic success of children with Down syndrome. In the meantime, we ask the Department and HRCE to develop a plan that will allow our children to continue to access their education while the strike continues. We eagerly look forward to our children once again joining their able peers in the classroom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allison Brewer", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Allison Brewer
Chair, HNSDSS