

# Safe Staff, Safe Schools

## A worker-led review of violence in Nova Scotia's public schools



### KEY FACTS

- In the past seven years, violent incidents have increased from 17,000 violent incidents in the 2016-17 school year and 27,000 in 2022-23—a 60% increase daily violence
- 43% of CUPE school support staff said they do not feel their employer does enough to prevent violence in the workplace
- 50% said when they reported violent incidents, they received no response
- 65 per cent of school support staff said that they witnessed or experienced violence in schools on a weekly basis, 31% experience violence daily
- At the South Shore Regional Centre for Education, 81% of violent incidents were reported were by school support staff
- At the Halifax Regional Centre for Education, over 600 incidents were reported from September 2023 to March 2024 and almost 70% were from school support staff
- Before COVID-19, Teaching Assistants in Halifax were provided with Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training. Now, training is reserved for only those TAs that are deemed to be at the highest risk of violence. Among our members, 52% of TAs report daily violence

### HEAR FROM SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

"Workplace Violence is traumatizing for those who experience it directly (support staff), but also those students who witness it happening to staff or classmates. There is no debriefing happening in the classroom after such incidents. To students who witness violence at school without debriefing, desensitization and an [attitude] that this is not a 'big deal' and is acceptable, is occurring."

"[Violence] has become way too common and accepted in the workplace. It takes a toll on your mental and physical [health]."

"I have to work so many different jobs; I am working all the time. My health can't keep up."

"I have been dealing with [violence] every day to the point I had to take time off work. Been back to work for a week and no recommendations [from my doctor] have been followed."

"What is the sense of filling out all our paperwork when nothing is ever done about it. School admins say it's part of the job. I did not sign up to be beaten every day. This year I have had to wear shin guards, arm guards, the jacket, gloves to work with a student. That should never be the case. I have filled out about 30 forms myself. It is not OK."

"I have a plan to live in a tent behind our school next winter because I can't afford rent anymore."

"Nothing is ever being done to help us. Reports are filled out, but nothing has changed. We are told, it is part of our jobs, but it is not, and we do not get paid very much especially to account for that."

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