

**Subject:** 'This is unreasonable and unsustainable ... Teachers have reached a breaking point' - MTS President

## EDUCATION

# Manitoba Teachers' Society calling for more school funding: 'Working conditions are deteriorating'



By **Shane Gibson** Global News

Posted November 5, 2020 5:51 pm

Updated November 5, 2020 7:54 pm

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) says the workload facing teachers during the ongoing [COVID-19](#) pandemic is unsustainable and is calling on the provincial government to act now to alleviate the strain facing educators.

On Thursday, the union asked the Manitoba government to put \$85.4 million in federal education funding to use.

"The majority of provinces have used this federal money to ensure that students and teachers are being given the necessary resources and supports," said MTS president James Bedford in a release Thursday.

"The inaction of the Manitoba government has led to a situation where students' learning conditions and teachers' working conditions are deteriorating at an alarming rate."

The group said the money is needed primarily to hire more staff — especially substitutes — as well as to provide mental health resources to both staff and students.

Bedford said the society has repeatedly asked the province for a plan for the federal money, but has yet to hear a clear response.

He said teachers are telling the union they're on the brink of burning out, especially since the province put [further restrictions in place](#) for schools in Winnipeg in an effort to curb significant increases in cases counts since the school year started.

There's also not enough substitutes available to meet system needs, Bedford said, warning an MTS poll of members that showed nine in 10 Manitoba are reporting high levels of stress this school year.

Manitoba tightens restrictions on schools in Winnipeg Metro, northern regions, in response to rising COVID-19 numbers – Oct 22, 2020  
“This is unreasonable and unsustainable ... Teachers have reached a breaking point,” he said.

“Teachers are looking to the province to invest in education, and once again their cry is falling on deaf ears.”

When asked about the union's concerns Thursday, Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister said the province had the “second highest per capita investment in the country” before [COVID-19](#) hit, and pointed to \$100 million in additional money [promised for school divisions](#) since the school year started.

He said education money from the federal government will be available throughout the school year. Pointing to a recent survey by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, which showed 86 per cent of Manitoba respondents were concerned about being able to maintain their own health, Bedford said the funding is urgently needed and can't come soon enough.

“Teachers need some relief. Not in a week. Not in a month. They need it now,” he said.

“Without additional teachers, without access to substitutes, without addressing the mental health impacts of a pandemic, the public education system is in danger of collapsing.

“Teachers can no longer carry the load without help from government.”