



May 2019

THE *ELECTION* BULLETIN

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, in line with its objective of promoting the cause of education in the province, has produced this Election Bulletin to highlight the importance of education as an issue during the provincial election campaign leading up to the **May 16, 2019** election.

The NLTA submitted eight questions to the leaders of the Liberal, New Democrat, NL Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties. These questions deal with such issues as an adequately funded education system, class size, resourcing of special education, mental health, violence in our schools, technological resources, and sharing of information among educational stakeholders. The questions, along with the responses from the party leaders, are contained in this Election Bulletin.

Education impacts every family, it impacts our economy, our health care indicators and our social system costs. It is through a properly funded public education system that our children are provided opportunity for success and happiness. Public expenditures on our education are significant. As such, we believe it is appropriate that our teachers and the general public know where our leaders stand on educational issues.

We suggest that a careful scrutiny of what the leaders have to say will assist you in your decision on voting day. We urge you to ask these and other questions of the candidates running in your district.

INVEST IN OUR KIDS!

Further information on the platforms of each party and leader can be located at the following:

• nliberals.ca • nl.ndp.ca • nlalliance.ca • pcnl.ca



LEADERS FORUM ON EDUCATION Monday, May 13

7:00 p.m., Holiday Inn
Portugal Cove Road, St. John's

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association invites teachers, and those concerned about education, to hear party leaders state their plans for education in the province. Show your concern for the future of our children. The party leaders will be responding to questions on public education issues.

Invest in Our Kids



QUESTION #1.

Public education is a fundamental human right and a public good which provides educational opportunities for all children. If elected, will a public education system that is adequately funded be a priority for your government and treated as an investment rather than an expense regardless of the current budgetary pressure?

LIBERAL PARTY

The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador agrees wholeheartedly that education is an investment in the future of our province and, really, our world as a whole. Education is a primary determinant of health, and we are committed to a Health in all Policies approach. It is incumbent upon us as a government to help prepare young people to thrive in and contribute to an increasingly complex world, and to carry that duty forward to the following generation. Quality, equitable education creates an informed and engaged citizenry. We need more of that.

Our province has indeed faced challenging times over the last number of years. When we were elected in 2015, we inherited a legacy of fiscal mismanagement. In fact, we had an economic crisis laid at our feet. The former government avoided a fall fiscal update before the 2015 election, allowing people (including us) to believe the deficit was at \$1 billion. On December 1, 2015, our first day at work, so to speak, we were told the deficit for 2015-16 was expected to be twice that. It was projected it would grow to \$2.7 billion the following year unless action was taken. In fact, unless we did something immediately to address the deficit, we would have had to borrow over \$15 billion by 2020-21. That would equate to borrowing almost \$300,000 an hour to keep the province going. Our children and grandchildren inheriting billions in debt and debt servicing is something we, as a government, could not allow to happen. As a province, we cannot allow that to happen.

We also inherited Muskrat Falls from the previous government, and with it, the responsibility for mitigating electricity rates to prevent them from doubling. Money diverted to mitigate electricity rates is money we cannot spend on public services or debt reduction. But we remain committed to ensuring people don't pay more for electricity as a result of Muskrat Falls, and to having a sustainable balanced budget by 2022-23.

It is not our intention to harp on the past, but it is important to provide some background about where we started in 2015 and to demonstrate that the actions we've taken and the progress we've

made have been driven by a vision and motivation to ensure the prosperity of today and tomorrow's children and youth.

Our deficit for 2018-19 was \$522 million – less than half of what it was when we formed government. That's progress.

As a government, we are committed to providing the best possible education system for our students. One of our first actions as a government was the establishment of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes.

Through the Independent Appointments Commission, the first bill we, as a government, introduced in the House of Assembly to ensure appointments were based on merit, four stellar leaders in education were appointed to the task force: Dr. Alice Collins (Chair), Dr. David Philpott, Dr. Marian Fushell and Dr. Margaret Wakeham.

Following extensive consultation with key stakeholders like the NLTA, school districts, Memorial University, parents and students; and informed by jurisdictional reviews, scholarly research and data from a number of sources; a final report with 82 recommendations was submitted to government. Recommendations focus on areas in the education system, including mental health and wellness, inclusive education, mathematics, literacy, Indigenous education, multicultural education, co-operative education, early years, and teacher education and professional development.

In 2018, our Government launched an Education Action Plan in response to the Premier's Task Force, and to date, 31 of the 82 recommendations in the Education Action Plan have already been implemented and many more are underway.

During our time in government, eight new schools have opened:

- Octagon Pond Elementary School in Paradise.
- Brookside Intermediate
- CBS Elementary
- Eastside Elementary
- Juniper Ridge Intermediate
- East Point Elementary
- Gander Elementary
- École intermédiaire et secondaire francophone de Saint-Jean
- St. Anne (Se't A'newey Kina'matino'kuom) School (federally funded)

We've issued the final public tender to complete the required remediation work at Bishop Feild Elementary, which is scheduled to be ready for re-occupancy in January 2020.

We have awarded the contract to construct a new primary school in Bay Roberts to replace Coley's Point Primary.

We have issued a Request for Proposals to construct the new Paradise Intermediate.

Tenders for the replacement of Bay d'Espoir Academy and the Gander Academy reconstruction will soon be issued, with construction on these three projects expected to start in 2019 and be completed in 2021.

Construction continues on the Mobile Central High and St. Peter's extensions, with occupancy of both expected this year.

Budget 2019 allocates funding for new and existing schools, including:

- \$39.2 million to begin construction of schools in Gander, Paradise, St. Alban's and Coley's Point in 2019.
- \$2.8 million to continue planning for a Francophone school in St. John's.
- \$14.5 million for repairs and maintenance of existing schools, including Bishop Feild.

These projects deliver on commitments outlined in The Way Forward: A Multi-Year Plan for Infrastructure Investments. The plan outlines commitments to education, health, buildings and roads, and municipal infrastructure through a total investment of nearly \$3 billion.

We've done a lot of work to right the ship, so to speak, and make sound investments in a very difficult fiscal climate. Both the task force and the infrastructure projects outlined above are sound investments in our future as a province, and in the future of today's and tomorrow's students and teachers.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

We consider education as an investment, not an expense. Cuts to the education budget have rarely been a "savings"—they have meant a loss in the capacity of schools to educate children and help them thrive. Schools need enough teachers, administrators and other staff, and the physical resources to uphold the rights of all students to an education.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

NL Alliance WILL make investments in our education system a priority. If Newfoundland and Labrador has any future at all we have to adequately invest in the education of our children. The future of Newfoundland and Labrador is our children. This is without question the biggest investment we could ever make. We know that having properly educated people who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to seek and find employment is what will help us have a sustainable future. They will have obtained life skills that will ensure they will be contributing members of society. In turn, this investment will provide the most effective long-term means of savings,

eliminating unnecessary spending within a system that would otherwise fail its people by not providing the basis for them to further themselves in life.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Yes. A public education system that is adequately funded will be a priority for my government and treated as an investment rather than an expense regardless of the current budgetary pressure. I want to improve educational outcomes, not cut education funding.

QUESTION #2.

Research indicates that class size does impact on educational and social outcomes. If your party forms the next government, will you guarantee quality education for students by improving class sizes and reinstating class sizes established by the 2008 Teacher Allocation Commission?

LIBERAL PARTY

We are absolutely committed to continuing to provide quality education for our students, as well as rewarding, supportive workplaces for our teachers and staff.

We recognize the complexities of today's classrooms with large numbers of students with exceptionalities, including intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and behavioural problems. It's part of why we struck a task force upon forming government. The world, and as microcosms, classrooms, are changing, and our system needs to change with it.

Our Education Action Plan will transform the K-12 system through bold commitments with solid governance and accountability mechanisms.

To oversee implementation of this action plan, a Steering Committee reporting to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has been established and is comprised of Deputy Ministers from the Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development (Chair); Health and Community Services; Children, Seniors and Social Development; and Advanced Education, Skills and Labour; CEOs of both school districts, the Dean of Memorial University's Faculty of Education; and the Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

Reporting to this steering committee are committees responsible for many recommendations within the nine areas of focus referenced above.

We are providing much needed supports to our classrooms to improve educational outcomes and advance social and emotional learning. Budget 2018 invested \$6.95 million towards implementation of the recommendations of the task force. Of this, \$3.1 million was allocated for reading specialists, learning resource teachers and instructional assistants in K-12 education; and \$1.9 million was allocated to support professional learning for teachers, and almost \$2 million provided annually for each of the three subsequent years.

Budget 2019 allocates \$13 million, an increase of \$6 million from last year, to continue implementation of the plan and support better outcomes for students. To ensure students and teachers have access to the supports they need, we are hiring 350 teacher resources over a three year period, including, as alluded to above, additional reading specialists, teacher librarians, and teaching learning assistants in K-12, and learning resources for teachers to support reading in the primary and elementary grades and for school libraries to support literacy development. We are also providing a mathematics bursary program to support teachers wishing to enhance their qualifications in mathematics.

To better support our classrooms, we are also investing an additional \$300,000 over last year to increase Student Assistant hours.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Since the Teacher Allocation Model was adopted in 2008, governments have continued to increase class sizes, adopting a budget-based approach instead of a needs-based approach. The Panel on the Status of Public Education and the Premier's Task Force Report on Educational Outcomes show that larger class sizes and the under-resourced inclusion model have had negative effects on student outcomes and well-being.

We believe the allocation of teachers and other staff cannot be made by numbers and geography alone, but must consider the composition and needs of each classroom. The NDP believes that the 2008 class sizes should be reinstated. We would work with the NLTA to review the teacher allocation model and provide enough teachers to eliminate combined grades, reduce the number of multi-grade classrooms, and provide the classroom supports students need.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

NL Alliance believes it is a priority to improve class size given the research on the impact of teacher-student ratios. With the diverse learners and high needs in our classrooms today it is a challenge to provide optimal learning for all students when the class size is too large. Teachers are often just managing behaviors.

Investing in our children's education is of top priority and we must always strive for the highest quality of education.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Improving educational outcomes will be among my government's highest priorities. We will reach these goals only by collaborating with teachers, taking seriously their recommendations and providing them with the support they require. Class sizes will factor into the equation, but as one element of the bigger picture. I commit to work with you on measures that will strengthen our education system, not undermine it or entrench the status quo. I will not come to the table with preconceived notions, but will listen with an open mind to the advice of those who know our classrooms best, the members represented by your Association.

QUESTION #3.

It is widely recognized by teachers and parent groups that the resourcing and organization model for special needs education is insufficient to meet the needs of the students in diverse classrooms. If elected, will your government be committed to providing additional human resources and for the purpose of improving educational opportunities for children with special needs?

LIBERAL PARTY

All children have the right to a quality education within a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment. Children enter the school system with their own individual experiences, abilities, interests, and backgrounds. We must be cognizant of the individual differences and experiences of children, and committed to providing a nurturing and responsive educational environment to help them reach their full potential.

One of the priority areas the Premier's Task force was asked to focus on was inclusive education.

The task force heard what we all know to be true: that the approach to inclusive education, introduced in 2009 as a model of delivering supports to students with exceptionalities, has not been working. Given inclusive education was implemented with no policy to support it, it is not surprising the approach of the former administration had failed students, teachers and staff alike.

The task force recommended that a new Student Support Services Policy be developed to clearly articulate a different

approach for the provision of programming and supports. The new policy will include placement options ranging from being in the classroom full time to spending portions of the day in another setting within the school environment to be responsive to student learning needs. Teachers will collaboratively design learning experiences for students using a tiered, student-centered structure to inform the level of intervention that is most appropriate. The focus will be on providing a learning environment where responsive teaching is the norm.

In addition to a new Student Support Services Policy that makes appropriate provision for all students, we are committed to:

- the introduction of teaching and learning assistants, working under the direction of classroom teachers, to offer instructional support to students;
- mechanisms and processes for the smooth transfer of student information and documentation from early years child care and intervention programs to school, across grade levels, and into postsecondary institutions, so that no instructional time is lost at any level for planning and assignment of support personnel;
- a seamless, year-round provision of services from education/health professionals for children and youth who have an assessed need for health interventions;
- streamlined, coordinated supports and services across departments for children with complex needs;
- the principles of Universal Design for Learning included in curriculum as it is renewed, and in the design of the learning environment, to produce more flexible learning opportunities for all learners;
- strengthened linkages between health and education policies and personnel to improve professional support services to children and youth;
- improvements to initial teacher education programs and professional learning in the areas of exceptionalities and student behaviour; and
- the optimum use of assistive technology through professional learning for teachers and effective management and deployment of resources.

We've also launched an Autism Action Plan, committing \$2.5M this year and growing that to \$5M in subsequent years.

The Plan addresses all aspects of living with ASD, including awareness, diagnosis and assessment, educational programming and other interventions and services that provide support for individuals and their families. The Autism Action Plan will see the expansion and creation of two programs that will ensure seamless supports across the lifespan. The Provincial Autism Services Program will expand Applied Behaviour Analysis

(ABA) programming beyond Grade 3 for children and youth up to age 21 and the Supporting Abilities Program for adults will encourage supportive employment opportunities.

JASPER (Joint Attention Symbolic Play Engagement Regulation) will be available to children up to age nine. JASPER is an ASD therapy that has proven, long-term positive results in children. Clinicians in the province have received extensive training in JASPER and this training will also be incorporated into family supports.

We are a member of the Atlantic Canadian Autism in Education Partnership, which was established to develop a regional approach to ASD training for educators across Atlantic Canada.

The actions we are taking through our Autism Action Plan will result in:

- Improved data collection across the lifespan on the number of individuals living with ASD availing of services and supports through the regional health authorities and in the education system.
- Increased access to interventions for children and youth living with ASD to support literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional learning.
- Increased knowledge and use of assistive technology to support the communication needs of children and youth living with ASD.
- Support for the social inclusion of children and youth living with ASD using appropriate peer-mediated techniques.
- Increased access to programming for children and youth living with ASD specific to the core features of ASD.
- Improved transition planning at key points for children and youth living with ASD.
- Disability awareness and ASD-specific training for professionals providing early-years programs.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The 2009 inclusion model has been defective from the start because there was no separate special education policy to guarantee supports to students with exceptionalities. The problems with poorly supported inclusion in our classroom have been well documented. The Premier's Task Force called for more flexible learning environments such as small groups and individual instruction, making it clear this will require more teaching professionals and student assistants. We support this and will make sure it happens, to the benefit of all students.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

We cannot rely on a formula-based model for resources as needs vary amongst students. This must be addressed on a school by school basis and regularly reviewed as school demographics often change.

Because of under-resourcing, school staffs are overstretched as they ensure the safety of our most vulnerable students. It would be a priority of an NL Alliance administration to ensure schools have sufficient staff, providing children a safe and caring environment in which to learn.

When implementing new initiatives such as The Responsive Teaching Policy, as a result of the Premier's Task Force, you cannot take from one area to finance another such as what we saw when \$300 000.00 was removed from Student Assistants (SAs) allocations to what appears to allow for the hire of the Teaching Learning Assistants (TLAs). By reducing the allocation of SAs in schools, it left our most vulnerable and needy students without adequate coverage which meant Instructional Resource Teachers, guidance counselors and administrators doing the work previously done by student assistants.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

The Collins Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes did fine work in reviewing the issues and bringing forward recommendations. We will ensure the sound recommendations are implemented. It does not matter to us that this was an initiative driven by the government of the day. Alice Collins, Marian Fushell, David Philpott and Margaret Wakeham produced a profoundly important plan (Now is the Time), and its recommendations must be acted upon. A government I lead will ensure the findings are heeded and the recommendations are effectively implemented for the sake of our students and the professionals who educate them.

Chapter 1 of that report contained findings and recommendations regarding "Inclusive Education." The report raised concerns about the current approach, and called for the development of a new policy with additional resources. While the work has started, a great deal more must be done, and all who ought to have a role in this should be fully engaged in shaping the final policy and implementing it.

QUESTION #4.

Mental health problems among children and youth have become a significant issue facing public schools. If elected, would your government provide more assistance and support to children and schools by mental health professionals and related personnel?

LIBERAL PARTY

As a government, we are committed to better services and better outcomes, and we recognize the urgency of reforming mental health and addictions care in this province to address gaps in our system, strengthen existing programs and services,

and break down the barriers of stigma and timely access.

Implementation of our Education Action Plan will result in:

- improved education for teachers and early childhood educators on mental health and wellness through initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning;
- a review of roles and responsibilities of specialist personnel, such as educational psychologists, speech language pathologists, and guidance counsellors, with the aim to improve access through improved service delivery to children and youth;
- embedded social/emotional learning in curriculum;
- a set of indicators of future mental health and addictions issues;
- specific learning outcomes for student mental health and addictions in most curriculum as it is renewed;
- increased accessibility to health services for children and youth and improved timeliness of service delivery; and
- policies and procedures to address chronic absenteeism and school dropout.

Social and emotional skills are necessary for achieving and maintaining personal well-being, and positive relationships are crucial to our young people thriving in the school environment and all aspects of life.

As part of our Responsive Teaching and Learning Initiative currently being phased in across the province, Budget 2019 provides an additional \$350,000 for Social and Emotional Learning curriculum into the School system.

In June 2017, we launched our action plan Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador. Since then, there has been a significant reduction in the number of people waiting for mental health and addictions counselling services, though much more remains to be done.

System transformation will require the combined effort of all of government, working closely with the regional health authorities, health care providers, individuals and families with lived experience, and community agencies.

We have established an Executive Committee comprised of the Deputy Minister of Health and Community Services, the CEOs of the four regional health authorities and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, which reports directly to the Minister of Health and Community Services and provides organizational direction to the Mental Health and Addictions Provincial Program Implementation Team.

The Implementation Team, comprised of senior mental

health and addictions staff at the Department of Health and Community Services and the regional health authorities, provides the oversight and approval for the planning and program work of eight project teams, and operationalizes the governance structure. They are also responsible for the performance and evaluation of the Implementation Plan.

One of those eight project teams is a Health in Schools team.

The Health in Schools Team is working to:

- Create regional interdisciplinary teams, reporting to the regional health authorities, to provide timely mental health and addictions assessment and treatment for students in schools.
- Encourage post-secondary institutions to provide evidence-based mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention programs for students during orientation and at various points throughout their programs.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive school health and wellness framework that includes evidence-based mental health promotion, prevention and integrated, early intervention programs in schools, which:
 - Focus on social and emotional learning;
 - Are embedded in curriculum at every grade;
 - Help students identify, understand and deal effectively with stress and anxiety;
 - Include content on diversity, social inclusion, social determinants of health and stigma reduction

The Towards Recovery Inclusion Team is undertaking the following actions to support children and youth:

- Provide general education to community leaders and policy makers, with a specific focus on LGBTQ2S youth, to increase understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity and mental health concerns.
- Establish standards for youth transitioning into adulthood (16-25 years old) that include a requirement for collaboration and evidence-based practices so that programs and services are geared to young people's needs wherever they live.

Progress report updates on our Towards Recovery Action Plan are provided to our Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council.

A new Recovery Council, comprised of individuals with lived experience of mental illness and/or an addiction, also has a performance monitoring function, reporting directly to the Minister.

This is a solid plan, complete with budgets, timelines and accountability and performance monitoring mechanisms.

Through a bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada, we have secured \$28.8 million over five years for mental health and addictions services.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Task Force made recommendations for more mental health professionals in the schools, but there still seems to be little awareness in government of the role being played by school counsellors in mental health, a role that infringes on their core responsibilities. Guidance counsellors are appointed at a ratio of 1:500 compared to the national standard of 1:250. The NDP would increase the ratio of guidance counsellors to 1:250, and increase the number of educational psychologists and other professionals to better address students' mental health needs.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

The Responsive Teaching Learning Policy recognizes that attending to the Social Emotional needs of students is top priority. School staffs can now provide interventions in this area with the aim of being proactive in helping students without students having to have a diagnosis. Again, this can only work if schools are properly resourced to attend to the social emotional needs of students. Teachers and all staff need adequate professional training in how to address these needs.

Also, it is very important to have a network of personnel working together to provide as much support as possible for all students within our education system.

There has to be partnering with external stakeholders so that all resources are made available to our students. This is vital in ensuring the best possible results are achieved.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Only in recent years has the issue of mental health gripped the public consciousness to such an extent that governments are impelled to advance change. At this moment, when everyone agrees it is urgent to act, we must seize the opportunity to bring about comprehensive changes in approaches. Teachers and K-12 students have been proudly and effectively taking the lead in driving this movement for change, and I know you will continue to do so.

Generally, to advance mental health care, we will do the following, as defined in the Blue Book. (Section 2.4)

A Crosbie government will be fully supportive of a new mental health hospital and will consult with appropriate health providers and mental health advocates to ensure the design and location will meet both current and future needs. These buildings are expensive, so we must get it right.

A Crosbie government will not cut health funding. Mental

health and addictions will be a key priority.

We will explore opportunities to improve access to psychiatrists and psychotherapy.

We will examine ways to complement the Doorways walk-in mental health service program by using telehealth more effectively to offer online services. This will improve access to non-emergency mental health services and counseling.

We will ensure the challenges of mental health and addictions treatment are subject to intense critical review and evolve in line with best practices. We will improve access to mental health care and addictions treatment as per the recommendations of the report of the all-party committee on mental health and addictions. We will consult on the most effective measures we can take to improve access to mental health and addictions services, including Suboxone treatment, and specialty appointments dealing with issues of mental health and addictions.

We will open up a broader public discussion about community drug issues, and work collaboratively with policing agencies, the health care sector, community groups, frontline professionals and others to find solutions that will protect our people and make our communities safer.

Specifically regarding education (Section 1.2), we will conduct school-by-school surveys to identify students who are at risk of dropping out and develop outreach programs and services to ensure their continued education; and ensure that all school guidance counsellors are better equipped.

Chapter 2 of the Collins Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes contains many findings and recommendations regarding “Student Mental Health and Wellness.” A government I lead will ensure the findings are heeded and the recommendations are effectively implemented for the sake of our students and the professionals who educate them.

QUESTION #5.

The NLTA is receiving increasing reports of violence against teachers in the classroom and harassment through social media posts. If your party forms the next government, what protections will you put in place to ensure teachers are safe in the workplace?

LIBERAL PARTY

Violence is unacceptable. Full stop. We must all endeavor to ensure our schools are respectful environments where teachers, staff and students feel safe. Classrooms are disrupted every day

because of behavioural issues, and systems beyond education are contending with growing and compounding complexities stemming from and affecting mental health issues. We know social media is helping extend harassment beyond the school day.

Our response to this behaviour, and our efforts to prevent future incidents, must be multifaceted. It is imperative that we all work together to take a stand against violence in our schools and in our society.

We've taken concrete measures throughout our time in government to reduce the incidence and impact of violence.

Recognizing the lifelong effects of domestic violence on families and children, we have expanded the definition of family violence in the Family Violence Protection Act to include psychological or emotional abuse.

We have also introduced family violence leave where the employee or a person to whom the employee is a parent or caregiver has been directly or indirectly subjected to family violence. With the introduction of family violence leave, an employee can use 3 days of paid leave and 7 days unpaid leave in a year as family violence leave.

We introduced An Act Respecting the Protection of Intimate Images to provide an additional legal option for those who have had private and sensitive intimate images shared without their consent.

We also introduced a new and progressive Children, Youth and Families Act. This Act focuses on supporting youth, strengthening service delivery to Indigenous children, youth and their families, preserving the family unit and expanding permanency options for children and youth in foster care.

The new Act supports youth in need of protection by increasing the scope of the duty to report to include youth aged 16 and 17 and removing restrictions so all youth receiving services can continue to do so up to age 21.

The new CYF Act focuses on preserving the family unit through the provision of appropriate and available supports to maintain children with their families where it is safe to do so using tools such as the Triple P Parenting Program and counselling.

We convened a task force to review the educational system, and we are confident these recommendations will result in transformative change. We are developing a new Student Support Services Policy and adding 350 teacher resources over a three year period. Through our Education Action Plan, our Towards Recovery Action Plan on Mental Health

and Addictions and through our Autism Action Plan, we are working to improve supports for students and teachers with a focus on improving access to mental health and other critical services, and creating schools that are truly safe and inclusive and that promote social and emotional learning.

Last year, in an effort to ensure the safety of our schools and those who study and work within them, our government amended the Schools Act to address the provision of alternate delivery of instruction where a student's presence would be detrimental to the well-being of others. The Act also provides the Directors of Education /CEO of the province's school districts with the legal authority to refuse school admission of a student where the district is of the opinion that the presence of the student in the school is detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of students or staff.

Beyond that amendment, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of the Schools Act to ensure the legislation is current and reflects The Way Forward commitment and our Education Action Plan. Public consultations have recently concluded, and one-on-one discussions with key stakeholder groups like the NLTA will be vital to informing this review.

These are just some of the actions we are taking to promote the wellbeing of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; the breadth of this response is intended to reflect the multifaceted approach required to contending with violence in our schools and society.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The increase in violence appears to come with the increase in complex needs in many younger students. As a first measure, the NDP would increase the supports for these children in the classroom, including more student assistants and other staff highly trained in intervention. Reducing class sizes and increasing the number of guidance counsellors and other professionals will also be part of the solution. In the long term, more consultation with teachers and others on the ground is needed.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

To keep our teachers safe in the workplace a focus needs to be placed on early detection when it comes to recognizing violent tendencies in children. Education and training for teachers is needed to ensure they are equipped with strategies to deal with difficult individual cases as well as provided the necessary tools to be empathetic to the emotional needs of these children. There needs to be immediate action taken once a child has shown violence towards a teacher or student. This responsibility should not be placed solely on the teacher or administrators.

Teachers need to be cognizant of their online activity to ensure they have the highest privacy settings. Also, if harassment becomes an issue and escalates to a dangerous level, there has to be supports in place whereby the teacher can take legal action.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Violence in any workplace is unacceptable. We will work with the NLTA and teachers to understand the scope of the problem and develop solutions that will work to keep teachers and students safe and the school environment free of harassment and other forms of violence.

Here are some specific policies in this regard that are defined in our Blue Book. (Section 2.5)

We will create a safe and healthy environment in every school. By carrying out targeted and schoolwide mental health interventions, we can simultaneously improve students' well-being and academic achievement.

We will bring forward a renewed Violence Prevention Strategy to build on the advances of the most recent Violence Prevention Strategy. Initiatives will relate to child protection, victim safety, shelters and support networks, transition houses, cyber-violence, workplace harassment, gang violence, human trafficking, protective police presence, restorative justice, victim impact, legal aid and support, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, elder abuse, persons with disabilities, racism and hate crime, gender-based violence, bullying, safe and caring schools, violence in care facilities, and other matters.

QUESTION #6.

If elected, what will your government do to ensure that every student and teacher in NL has equal access to the technological resources that are essential for learning and teaching in a 21st century, world class education system?

LIBERAL PARTY

Our government is committed to the advancement of technology in the classroom and beyond.

In the consultative process undertaken by the task force, it was relayed that despite significant investments being made by the department to promote the use of assistive technology, teachers report low comfort levels with support technology and require professional learning on incorporating it into student support plans.

Implementation of our Education Action plan will result in the optimum use of assistive technology through professional learning for teachers and effective management and deployment of resources.

One particular initiative we have undertaken to advance technology in the classroom is our partnership with Brilliant Labs. Brilliant Labs is an Atlantic Canadian organization that supports coding, computational thinking and Maker Education in schools. This program has a proven track record in the delivery of coding and technology content to educators and students, as well as engaging community partners and industry throughout. This partnership is providing educational technologies in Newfoundland and Labrador schools such as interface equipment, sensors, programming languages, and 3D printing.

Our work with Brilliant Labs aligns with key initiatives of The Way Forward, such as the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, the recently released Technology Work Plan and the Business Innovation Agenda. A goal of the Technology Work Plan is to enhance the development of K-12 technology skills through engagement with the technology industry, including increased exposure to coding and participation in youth technology experience programs.

Since the partnership with Brilliant Labs began:

- 149 successful proposals have been funded
- 17 makerspaces have been established
- 1731 teacher contacts have been made through Professional Learning
- 5734 learning interaction with students have taken place.

We want to provide our students every opportunity to reach their full potential – to become innovators, educators, researchers, and leaders. We want that for our teachers too. We are targeting both traditional sectors and emerging sectors like the tech sector to grow and diversify the economy and create jobs. Part of that capacity building requires we work together to nurture students to become creative problem solvers and leaders who continue to drive innovative, leading edge technology and make Newfoundland and Labrador a world leader and a place to invest.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

There is no question that access to technology is uneven in the school system. Resources have been so underfunded that schools in relatively wealthy areas are relying on parental contributions and fundraising to meet the need. The NDP would like to see more investment in technology, including computer equipment and smart boards, and technical assistance, to ensure a level playing field for rural and urban schools.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

For our students to be on a level playing field and to be able to compete with others around the world, it is imperative to invest in the technologies needed; though it cannot stop there. Over the last few years we have seen an influx of computers, Team Boards/ Smart Boards, etc., but have not had the technical support to install these technologies in a timely manner and/or respond to requests for technical support when there are issues. In large schools, it is absolutely necessary to have an in house IT person to attend to the many issues and challenges that arise. Teachers are beyond frustrated with having to wait for technical support. In smaller schools there should be a sharing of that person. Currently many schools have long wait periods for Board IT support.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Our Blue Book acknowledges the importance of becoming a leader in the application of advanced educational technologies so our students are prepared to lead once they graduate. We talk about the advanced in artificial intelligence and its associative machine learning and robotics, and predict it will change almost every line of work. To ensure we are prepared, my government will examine the intended post-secondary choices of graduating high school students to determine if the numbers of students opting for technically oriented careers are commensurate with projected needs for technology oriented jobs; in high schools and among the general public, promote technology related careers as viable and desirable in the emerging age of AI automation; and develop and enhance technology oriented programs at post-secondary institutions, where needed. We will also bring together thought leaders from business, labour, academia, the not-for-profit sector and government to discuss today's workplace challenges along with strategies to chart a successful path forward. Key questions for discussion will include: (a) How do we build a highly skilled flexible work force that meets present demand, is able to adapt to changes in the work place, and is able to transfer between sectors?, and (b) What initiatives should we take to reduce barriers that can exclude people, including youth, women, older workers, persons with disabilities and immigrants? Much of this work will focus on improving labour market access and attachment and providing appropriate social protections.

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) was introduced by the Peckford government to expand educational opportunities through the use of technology. CDLI can continue to help our province break barriers by expanding educational opportunities. My government will work with educators to develop plans to expand CDLI services

to a wider variety of students and curricular areas in our province; develop plans to use the CDLI infrastructure to enhance existing course offerings and to create new course offerings currently unavailable to NL students; develop plans to extend CDLI course offerings into the intermediate grade levels; and develop plans to empower parents to become more involved in the education of their children, such as CDLI-based homework/study strategies specific to a wide variety of courses, access to online tutors, and online discussion forums.

QUESTION #7.

If elected, what will be your government's expectation regarding cooperation and sharing of information among the educational stakeholders, including: The NLTA, Provincial School Districts, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Department of Justice and Public Safety, Department of Health and Community Services, Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

LIBERAL PARTY

As a government, we are committed to open dialogue and cooperation with and among stakeholders. We also respect personal privacy as it pertains to information sharing.

Last spring, our government introduced the Children, Youth and Families Act, which improves information sharing to assist in the protection of children and youth. The Act includes a duty to report where a person has information that a child or youth is or may be in need of protective intervention.

Stakeholders like the NLTA, school districts, government and police forces all play a fundamental and interactive role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students and schools. It is incumbent upon us all to work together and balance the need to share information with the protection of personal privacy.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The "silo" structure of human services has been detrimental to solving problems. For example, guidance counsellors may identify a mental health issue but not get timely counselling and treatment for that student. The NDP would implement more cross-department/agency communication and make sure more social workers, occupational therapists, and mental health professionals are in our schools.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

It is important to have strong networking amongst all groups listed. It is equally important to have an accessible means of exchanging ideas, concerns, solutions, etc. It would certainly be in the best interest of students to have a collaborative approach with all stakeholders in education to addressing needs as they arise, but more importantly having programs and supports available to schools to get in front of the issues and be proactive, rather than waiting for things to happen, then react.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Cooperation, collaboration and honesty will be hallmarks of any government I lead. I believe in sharing information while respecting the privacy rights of individuals. I commit to ensure that our government departments will work openly, collaboratively and productively with the NLTA, the Provincial School Districts, the police (RNC and RCMP) and any others who need to be at the table to advance the work we are trying to do. These others may include school councils, post-secondary educators, health and social work professionals, and so forth.

Here's what I state in our Blue Book. (Section 3.1)

"As a foundational principle, a Crosbie government will not only respond to the changing needs of people, but also allow for the broad participation of people in decision-making. Accordingly, the policies, programs and methods of a Crosbie government will shift toward partnerships with businesses, unions, academic institutions, other governments and voluntary organizations to reshape processes of decision-making into forms that are more suitable for a modern, inclusive society.

We will:

- Provide forums for citizens and groups to be consulted on their concerns and perspectives.
- Make better use of digital communications technology to improve democratic engagement and information exchange.
- Establish a process to tap into the particular expertise of academic leaders.
- Establish a process by which public employees can provide regular advice about ways to reform government operations and enhance accountability."

QUESTION #8.

If elected, what other initiatives does your party plan to implement in the K-12 education system in our province?

LIBERAL PARTY

We are committed to ensuring the transformational change required to improve educational outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We are phasing in implementation, and began with 40 schools in September 2018. We will add another 40 schools in September 2019 and the remainder in September 2020.

We are proud to have implemented full day kindergarten throughout our province because we know the potential for full day kindergarten to not only support young families, and in particular, mothers, but to help level the playing field for young children.

Coming from a recommendation of the Premier's Task Force, we are undertaking consultations to inform the development of a guiding document and phased-in implementation plan for Junior Kindergarten. This play-based, quality early learning program would be available for four year old children in our province during the year prior to Kindergarten.

This year, we will be launching a new program that will provide children starting kindergarten with access to a free, comprehensive eye exam from an optometrist.

We will contribute \$250,000 in coverage for children by supporting the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Optometrists to deliver the Eye See Eye Learn Program.

This initiative will allow children to overcome potential barriers to eye exams and contribute to a more positive learning experience, as well as an overall improvement to their quality of life.

Transportation of students is a major focus. We will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure the safety of our children. While our current bussing policy is more favorable than most other provinces, we have continued to review bus routes and added many more stops within the 1.6 kilometre zone. We will continue to review areas of concern and work with stakeholders to ensure continued safety of our children.

Through our Education Action plan, we have articulated timelines and lead partners on the 82 recommendations of the Premier's Task Force.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

When the School for the Deaf was closed in 2010 the government promised all deaf children would get the resources they need. But then the decision was made that cochlear implants would be enough. But implants don't work for everyone, and there are deaf children isolated in the classrooms. The NDP would make sure every deaf child has access to ASL interpretation in the classroom.

NL ALLIANCE PARTY

The recent changes made as a result of the Premier's Task Force is definitely in the right direction. The Responsive Teaching Policy is well developed and is getting to the needs and addressing them through a tiered approach to learning. This is far better than the older model of having to complete a prereferral and then implementing a variety of teaching strategies over a period of time to determine whether or not further assessments are needed to determine if the student has a learning challenge. In the previous model, before RTL Policy, and only after this long process and only if a diagnosis is determined to be the cause of a child's deficits and or challenges, can a student receive support from an Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT). Under the new model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) teachers are able to provide interventions to any student once it is determined through sufficient data collecting and analysis that the student requires interventions to be successful. Removing the prereferral process, and not having to wait for a diagnosis before offering interventions and support to those students who are not successful in the Universal classroom setting, is a move in the right direction. Also, having Reading Specialist, Learning Resource Teachers and Teaching Learning Assistants added to schools is an added bonus, one teachers have been calling for for years.

The unfortunate thing about this new policy, is everything is determined on a formula based system which can lead to high student numbers per teacher, and depending on school size you may or may not get any of the specialists such as Reading Specialists, Learning Resource teachers and or Teaching Learning Assistants. Under an NL Alliance government this formula would be reviewed and adjusted accordingly to ensure all students get equal educational opportunities.

NL Alliance supports a strong skilled trades program in High Schools and believes it is necessary in today's society to help prepare our youth for options in the trades. In the past, High Schools were resourced with quality tools and the necessary equipment to have skilled trade courses, but when numbers decline, and cuts have to be made, unfortunately it is these courses, as well as the arts, that get cut first. Students need these options and we must provide equal opportunity for all students

regardless of the size of their school. This might mean being creative and working with community partners if the numbers are just too small to offer a particular course in the school setting.

The Student CO-OP program was a beneficial program. It allowed students real work experiences in the areas of their interests. This is something that needs to be reassessed and reinstated.

High Schools need to have mentoring programs and find creative ways to engage the disengaged learners. NL Alliance believes it is through true collaboration with students, parents, teachers, and administrators these ideas come to fruition.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

A common indicator of cognitive achievement, used around the world, is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA tests 15 year olds every three years in three key subject areas: math, reading and science. In the latest round of tests, Canada was in the top tier of international rankings. Within Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador ranked near the bottom when compared to other provinces. More alarming, since 2003 Newfoundland and Labrador's ranking has declined nationally and internationally.

A Crosbie government will focus our schools on developing cognitive learning to the limit of each child's capacity to learn cognitive skills. That approach will reduce achievement gaps between rich and poor, the learning advantaged and the learning disadvantaged, urban and rural, and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians compared to students in the rest of Canada.

A Crosbie government will acknowledge the performance problem we have and give the Education Department and our School Boards a year to come up with performance targets that will:

- close the PISA gap between NL and the average for Canada by 2030;
- reduce the PISA performance gap between rural and urban schools; and
- reduce the PISA performance gap between the learning advantaged and learning disadvantaged students.

A Crosbie government, in partnership with the English and Francophone School Districts, will:

- Develop the necessary remedial programs, teaching techniques, policies and funding model to ensure that significantly more students have mastered reading before entry into the Intermediate education program;
- Develop the necessary remedial programs, teaching techniques, policies and funding model to ensure that significantly more students have mastered basic mathematics

functions before entry into the Intermediate education program;

- Articulate and promote mathematics and reading cultures among students and the general public that instill the importance of these disciplines in future academic and career success;
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the senior high school curriculum and make changes necessary to ensure that courses are relevant and promote creative thinking, problem solving, financial literacy, civic participation, and decision-making skills essential to personal and professional success in the 21st century;
- As part of the above review, develop a strategy that ensures all students understand the need and opt for the more academically demanding high school courses needed for success at the post-secondary level;
- Conduct school-by-school surveys to identify students who are at risk of dropping out and develop outreach programs and services to ensure their continued education;
- Develop more robust mechanisms for obtaining high school certification, for students who have already dropped out;
- Ensure that all school guidance counsellors are better equipped and are given sufficient time to provide high school students with the knowledge, skills and information they need to make informed career and post-secondary decisions;
- Examine high school graduation requirements and refine them where appropriate to match current and future labour markets;
- Examine intermediate and high school course offerings and modify them where appropriate to align them with national and international best practices in ways that will more effectively prepare students for post-secondary education options and career choices after high school;
- As a necessary consequence of the closure of the School for the Deaf in 2010, provide training in American Sign Language (ASL) to teachers and fellow students of the several hundred deaf and hard of hearing students in our school system, to ensure that inclusive learning is truly inclusive of the developmental and educational needs of this unique population. Deaf and hard of hearing students should receive the same level of services as was provided to them at the date of closure of the School for the Deaf. We will conduct a review to identify gaps and work with parents to develop a plan to close the gaps.

We will also develop a new policy on school busing within 1.6 kilometres of school, so children can get to and from school safely.