



MEMORANDUM

Programs and Services

To: All NLTA members

From: Programs and Services

Date: October 15, 2018

Re: Classrooms and Fire Protection Legislation

Many teachers have questions about the rules regarding maximum classroom capacity. We are asking school representatives to forward the following information to all teachers and to post this memo in an appropriate location in your school.

Questions seem to be arising due to increased class sizes across the province. However, this is not a new issue – the Association has consulted before with the Fire Commissioner’s Office and Occupational Health and Safety. We have also been in contact with NLESD officials who have advised that they have sent a memo to administrators in October of this year (as well as other years) on fire safety code compliance, which includes a section on maximum classroom capacities.

Newfoundland and Labrador has adopted by legislation the National Building Code (NBC), National Fire Code (NFC), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 101, Life Safety Code. The regulations we are most concerned with are found in the National Fire Protection Association 101, Life Safety Code.

The posting of maximum occupancy loads is not required for classrooms. The general guidelines set out 20 square feet per person as a starting point for determining a classroom occupant load which may increase based on the layout of desks and tables as long as the egress space is at least 30 inches. This means that the space between rows of student seats/desks should be 30 inches leading to an exit aisle of 30 inches. Given that the focus is on usable space, and many classrooms contain tables and other furniture, the key point is that 30 inch egress must be maintained. The other point to keep in mind is that teachers will often move desks around or redesign their classroom but in doing they should maintain the 30 inch egress.

If a teacher is concerned that the room they are currently teaching in is over capacity they should certainly first reach out to their principal and then, if unresolved, the school Occupational Health and Safety Committee. If any teacher would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact the NLTA: (709) 726-3223 or 1 800 563-3599 – Miriam Sheppard (ext. 230), email msheppard@nlta.nl.ca or Darrin Pike (ext. 226), email dpike@nlta.nl.ca.