

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
 **MEDIA RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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CLASS SIZE MATTERS

St. John's, NL... The NLTA is concerned that this current government is going to once again increase class sizes without having completed the review of the teacher allocation model that was required and should have occurred prior to integrating children with significant special needs into the regular classroom. The NLTA is calling on government to conduct the public review that was promised in 2011 before making any further changes to our education system.

Since 2011 successive provincial governments have increased class sizes in this province by amending the Teacher Allocation Model established in 2008. In 2008 the government announced, with considerable fanfare, a new teacher allocation model which was the product of public consultations and the work of an independent commission specifically appointed for this purpose. Increases to class sizes have continued to occur at the same time as government forced the integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms without the individualized supports to which they had been accustomed. The negative results of these two public policy decisions are well understood by teachers and parents.

The NLTA has repeatedly raised concerns with government officials regarding the adverse impact on children's education of increasing class sizes. While the report of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes did outline how the Inclusive Education Model was failing students and has led to some new and needed resources, it was silent on the issue of class size. This glaring omission occurred despite a detailed submission and recommendations from the NLTA.

It is clear that this government sees increasing class sizes as a means to save money or reallocate money to other priorities. In 2016 the government increased the class sizes of grade one to grade nine classes so it could introduce full day kindergarten.

"The NLTA is aware of a recent memo that has been circulated to principals suggesting that kindergarten class sizes could be increased to 24 students from a current maximum of 20 students in order to accommodate junior kindergarten," states Dean Ingram, President of the NLTA. "This increase in class size was not referenced in public consultations on junior kindergarten, or during individual consultations with the NLTA. Again, this is exactly what we were afraid of – the introduction of new programming and approaches at the expense and to the detriment of the rest of the system/students".

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When class sizes are increased at the same time as the forced integration of children with special needs without adequate supports, this has a negative impact on the educational experience for all children in that class. The issue of class size cannot be effectively addressed in isolation from the other factors that contribute to the quality of the learning environment for students. Determining an appropriate class size should never be considered without also considering the context of class composition.

“We feel it is necessary to get the general public more involved in the debate on class size and class composition,” says Ingram. “To this end, we are distributing “Class Size Matters” buttons to all NLTA members to bring more attention to this important issue and encourage discussions between teachers and parents regarding the impact class size and composition are having on children’s education.”

All NLTA members are asked to display the pins in the workplace and during their daily routines. As the wearing of these types of pins is constitutionally protected, which has been upheld by arbitrators and the courts, the Association does not expect that teachers will be directed to remove them from the workplace.

“However, should any member be directed to either remove the pins or to direct others to remove the pins, they are advised to comply and to contact the Association as soon as possible. The NLTA will take any infringement on teachers’ fundamental Charter rights seriously and engage all necessary avenues and resources to address same.”

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For further information contact:

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