

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



MEDIA RELEASE

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NLTA REACTS TO BUDGET 2023

St. John's... The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is not impressed that Budget 2023 did not include any funding to improve learning and working conditions for K-12 students and staff. The Budget is entirely silent on support for a comprehensive plan to address the hidden reality in schools across the province related to retention and recruitment of certified teachers and the ongoing challenges caused by inadequate human resourcing.

"The current difficulties in teacher recruitment and retention have long been looming; the issues cannot be a surprise to anyone. It is an ongoing struggle in many parts of the province, particularly in rural and remote communities but not limited to these areas. Substitute teacher shortages, and vacant positions in some schools, are not unusual in recent years. Our Association has been calling for a comprehensive strategy to address these challenges for some time," said Trent Langdon, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. "Today, this government had an opportunity to show parents, students and educators that they know the value of a well-resourced, publicly funded, public education system and are committed to investing in the future of our children. Unfortunately, the budget announcements do not present a strategy that demonstrates an understanding of the hidden reality facing students and school staff in this province."

Class size and composition remain a significant concern for the NLTA. Schools need smaller class groupings and increased allocations to provide the critical supports many students need in order to enable access to the same learning opportunities as their peers. No action has yet been taken by government to determine if/how certain recommendations from the report of the Teacher Allocation Review Committee will be implemented, and the Association is looking forward to fulsome and meaningful consultation as a significant stakeholder in that process.

Parents, students and educators have watched as an action plan has been developed and implemented to address healthcare issues in this province. We do not dispute the importance of health care and access to reliable services for residents of this province. But, investment in education, an acknowledged determinant of health and other social/economic outcomes, should come hand in hand with this as an adequately resourced public K-12 system can only serve to foster and support the positive impact of improvements in health care.

"Government cannot afford to ignore the fact that many of our schools are frequently in triage mode," said President Langdon. "I hear from members daily about re-deployment of staff such as guidance counsellors, reading specialists, IRTs, TLAs, administrators, etc. to cover for absent colleagues and to attend to basic personal care needs of students due to inadequate student assistant allocations; combining classes in larger spaces such as the gym or cafeteria just to provide adequate supervision and ensure student safety; cancelling certain instructional areas such as music and physical education to re-deploy specialist teachers to regular classrooms; and sometimes the cancellation of classes for certain groups due to lack of staff. This is the hidden reality that the NLTA has been talking about."

Today's Budget announcements for K-12 education do nothing more than maintain an already inadequate status quo and account for increasing student enrollment, and this is not good enough.

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