

# Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association



## Priorities for 2023-25

Provincial Executive

January 26-27, 2024

# Priority #1: Workload Concerns

Goal: To improve the working conditions of teachers generally and to address individual teacher workload concerns

- Programs and Services are receiving and responding to a high volume of calls/emails from members about workload concerns (teaching assignments, classes “over cap”, duty schedules, etc.) during Fall 2023. Staff are assisting and, in many cases, subsequent contacts were made with District officials to advocate on behalf of the members involved. This continues into January 2024.
- Programs and Services staff assisted numerous teachers during Fall 2023-24 in drafting correspondence re: class size and composition and inadequate resources that prevent them from effectively delivering curriculum and ensuring a safe and effective teaching and learning environment despite their best efforts as caring and competent professionals. In at least one case, additional allocations have followed.
- During the Fall of 2023-24, Administrative Officers have assisted teachers with exercising the right to refuse unsafe work under OHS legislation. Members have been provided with advice and support regarding violence in the classroom, rights, responsibilities and options. Several such refusals are still ongoing in January 2024.
- On November 20, 2023, the Association was made aware of significant changes that had been made to the NLESD Assessment and Evaluation Regulations, with the new Guidelines to take effect “immediately”. The nature and timing of the changes would have significant impact on workload for teachers. This was also done without consultation or input from teachers. NLTA staff intervened immediately and, after several conversations with Department of Education officials, implementation of the guidelines was repealed/postponed via a communication from District staff to principals on November 21, 2023. The Association continues to monitor this issue post-integration and will advocate for members on any proposed changes moving forward.
- At their December 2023 meeting, the Teachers’ Pension Plan Joint Sponsor Body considered a proposal to extend (for the current school year) the maximum number of days which a retired teacher can substitute. The proposal was approved and as such, retirees will be able to substitute beyond the normal maximum for the current school year.
- The Association is working with M5 to develop a campaign to run in February/March 2024 that highlights the current struggles in the classroom (i.e.: workload, violence, lack of resources). The timing of the campaign will coincide with the Teacher Think Tank, as well as the Provincial Budget and potential (rumoured) call for a Spring 2024 Provincial Election.

- The Association is working on and will submit a pre-Budget submission to government early in 2024. That submission will focus on the lack of resources in the classroom and the concerns being raised by teachers. The submission will ask government to make spending on Education a priority in the 2024 Budget. Once completed and submitted to government, the submission will be shared with the membership.
- In response to changes to the guidelines for comprehensive assessments which now require lead assessors to complete hearing and vision screeners, Programs and Services staff have filed two ATIPP requests. The report from one of these requests has resulted in the filing of a policy grievance (failure to consult).
- In December 2023, an arbitration challenging an employer hiring decision was concluded. A synopsis of this arbitration will be published in *The Bulletin* once a ruling is made.
- In December 2023, on behalf of the Special Interest Council leadership, Programs and Services staff have lobbied NLSchools and the Department of Education outlining the key challenges facing their members and their key professional learning needs. A meeting with the Assistant Deputy Minister is planned for January 2024.
- Programs and Services staff are assisting the School Administrators' Council in establishing funding guidelines and leave for members to attend the Provincial SAC Conference and the National CAP Conference in Spring 2024.
- The President and Executive Director met with the new Dean of the MUN Faculty of Education on January 10, 2024. Discussion included the topics of recruiting more students to the Faculty and making teacher training programs more easily accessible for interested individuals living in rural/remote areas.
- An Administrative Officer and the Executive Director liaised with the CSFP and the ADM for K-12 Education in December 2023 and January 2024 to assist in supporting efforts to increase staffing levels at Ecole Boreale in HVGB, which is seriously understaffed due to recruitment challenges.
- Programs & Services will have an article on reporting workplace violence in the January/February 2024 edition of *The Bulletin*.

## Priority #2: Membership Well-Being and Protection

Goal: To promote and improve supports for teacher health and wellness, including teacher mental health and well-being

*(See Appendix for updates on recommendations from the Teacher Mental Health and Well-being Ad Hoc Committee)*

- The volume of teachers requiring EAP support and intervention continues to grow during Fall 2023 and early 2024. More than 1 in 7 teachers under NLESD are currently accessing EAP supports. Due to the continued growth of mental health referrals to the EAP for Teachers program, EAP has had to significantly reduce the number of workshops provided in schools. There are ongoing requests and a need for more wellness workshops in schools throughout the province.
- Programs and Services staff assisted/advised several members who expressed concern about the “Kids in the Know” training during early Fall 2023. The Association has since been granted representation at the provincial table for consultation on subsequent roll out plans for this program in K-9 that will take place over the next 2 years.
- On October 30 and November 2, 2023, two Administrative Officers presented sessions on The Code of Ethics and Legal Issues impacting teachers for Memorial University Faculty of Education students.
- During the Fall of 2023-24 Administrative Officers have assisted teachers with exercising the right to refuse unsafe work under OHS legislation. Members have been provided with advice and support regarding violence in the classroom, rights, responsibilities, and options. Several such refusals are still ongoing in January 2024.
- Confirmation was received early in January that the Think Tank Questionnaire would be distributed to teachers (electronically) for completion beginning on January 17, 2024 and will remain available for 3 weeks. This has been delayed a bit by translation. This will be followed by a Think Tank Virtual Session on February 23, 2024. Participants will include officials from Government (including the Premier and the Minister of Education), NLTA representatives (including teachers) and other invited guests. The agenda and attended list are under development.
- The first meeting of the School Safety Coalition, initiated by the President, was held at the NLTA office on September 28, 2023. In attendance were: the NLTA President and Executive Director; the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and the Minister of Education; the Executive Director of the Federation of School Councils; representatives from the RNC and RCMP, Relationships First and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. Dates for a second meeting in early 2024 are being explored.
- In late August and mid November 2023, the NLTA was consulted and provided feedback to the DOE on proposed adjustments to current NLESD policy intended to reflect the

integration of the District into the DOE. While all the proposed changes are, at this stage, technical in nature (for example, changes in titles, etc.), NLTA flagged policies on secure schools and lockdown procedures for more substantive review and consultation moving forward.

- The Association prepared a letter from the President to all NL senators in Ottawa to advocate for support of the CTF proposed amendment to the Criminal Code for language to replace section 43 in the event that the current provision is repealed in response to a recommendation from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. NLTA has also provided CTF with relevant information on NL cases and opinions from our legal counsel in support of these efforts. The President and Executive Director have met with two senators to date (November 2023, December 2024) and a further meeting is scheduled for early February 2024.
- EAP wrote a wellness article for the November/December 2023 edition of *The Bulletin* on 'The Gift of Soft Eyes During this Holiday Season'.
- One EAP Coordinator completed the Self-Regulation Foundations Certificate Program. Both EAP Coordinators have now completed certification in self-regulation as of November 2023.
- The Association is working on gathering reliable data on student violence/aggression in schools for use in a public awareness initiative on working/learning conditions in early 2024. ATTIP requests were filed with the RNC, RCMP, NLESD and CSFP and all responses were received by the end of December 2023. Initial exploration of possible further research through a membership survey/polling has also occurred.
- An NLTA Administrative Officer conducted teacher PL sessions at two central regions schools in November 2023.
- An NLTA Administrative Officer delivered a session on Dealing with Difficult Situations during an Avalon region school PL day in November 2023.
- The President wrote to the Minister of Education in January 2024 to initiate advocacy efforts for the establishment of a paid orientation program/sessions for newly hired teachers.
- On November 20, 2023, the Association was made aware of significant changes that had been made to the NLESD Assessment and Evaluation Regulations, with the new Guidelines to take effect "immediately". The nature and timing of the changes would have significant impact on workload for teachers. This was also done without consultation or input from teachers. NLTA staff intervened immediately and, after several conversations with Department of Education officials, implementation of the guidelines was repealed/postponed via a communication from District staff to principals on November 21, 2023. The Association

continues to monitor this issue post-integration and will advocate for members on any proposed changes moving forward.

- The Association has received, through ATIPP requests, information from the RNC, RCMP, CSFP and NLSchools related to violence in schools. Analysis of that information has been provided by research firm MQO and the Association is working with M5 to develop a campaign to run in February/March 2024 that highlights the current struggles in the classroom (i.e.: workload, violence, lack of resources). Information received in December 2023 via ATIPP requests will be used in this project. The timing of the campaign will coincide with the Teacher Think Tank, as well as the Provincial Budget and potential (rumoured) call for a Spring 2024 Provincial Election.
- The President and Assistant Executive Director met with members of the Churchill Falls Branch in January 2024 to discuss concerns they have with their employer and provide advice/support for addressing these.
- Programs & Services will have articles on reporting workplace violence and the basics of workplace accommodations in the January/February 2024 edition of *The Bulletin*.
- EAP wrote a wellness article for the January/February 2024 edition of *The Bulletin* titled, 'The Deal on Deep Listening'.
- In conjunction with Bell Let's Talk Day (January 24, 2024), the Association will hold a membership prize contest via social media to help raise awareness of the EAP for teachers.
- In response to a severe weather situation in Corner Brook and surrounding areas on January 18, 2024, the Association assigned an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services to be the primary contact to assist concerned members. The Assistant Executive Director and Executive Director brought a number of issues and concerns to the attention of NLSchools officials. The President had several media interviews on January 19, and wrote to the Minister on January 22 to outline concerns and request a full investigation of what occurred and thorough review of relevant employer policies and procedures.

## Priority #3: Collective Bargaining and Services for Members

Goal: To continue to provide exceptional representation and supports to members, including through collective bargaining and other programs and services

- A new Provincial Collective Agreement was ratified on December 7, 2023. A total of 5211 members (72% of eligible voters) voted with 76% voting to accept the contract. An update was sent to members in early January 2024 regarding timing of signing and implementation in relation to pay matters.
- On August 29, 2023, the President, Executive Director and Assistant Executive Director met with Department and District officials, including the Minister of Finance and Superintendent Terry Hall, to discuss past issues/concerns with payroll and the plan moving forward. It was agreed that a subsequent meeting would be held in January 2024 to debrief how changes made during the Fall have improved things or if further measures might be required. A follow-up meeting was held with the Assistant Executive Director, the Comptroller for Government Payroll and Payroll Liaison Officers at the District and Department to discuss the plan.
- NLTA staff had further meetings with NLESD and Government officials in November 2023 as part of ongoing discussions related to payroll. NLESD now has a process in place to ensure teachers will be notified when an overpayment occurs and has confirmed that, by default, repayments will be recovered in accordance with the collective agreement (over 12 months) and members will have the opportunity to make alternate arrangements should they wish. Retroactive payments are in the process of being taxed using a “bonus tax method” which will better reflect normal tax amounts that would have been deducted had monies been received on time over several pay periods rather than all at once. Codes have been developed in the payroll system to address retroactive pay scenarios being paid using the bonus tax method automatically going forward. Any new issues that NLTA has brought forward on this have resulted in updates to payroll coding as well.
- Government officials have advised (Fall 2023) that options for a new payroll system to replace TCAS are being explored. In this regard, NLTA continues to stress the importance of including in this project options for members to be able to privately access personal information such as sick leave balances as well as the need for improvements to pay advice information, to make pay statements easier to understand. A letter relating to leave

balances is part of the recently ratified agreement, in which the parties acknowledge that the Employer is exploring methods in which employees can access their leave accruals.

- Programs and Services staff assisted members with a number of payroll questions/issues during September 2023, the majority of which have been resolved. However, payroll issues have continued to arise over the Fall 2023 and early 2024 – Administrative Officers are assisting members as necessary while broader system discussions are ongoing.
- In early September 2023, the Association sent a survey to members requesting information about the impact of substitute shortages and vacant positions during the 2022-23 school year. Response rates were good, information was used in bargaining, and anecdotal submissions have been used in the updated #hiddenreality social media campaign content during the Fall 2023.
- The Assistant Executive Director and Administrative Officer, Miriam Sheppard, attended CAPTTO Economic Welfare meetings in Prince Edward Island September 18-19, 2023. The focus of discussion was on current bargaining in the Atlantic region. Other meetings are scheduled to be held in February 2024, in Halifax.
- All five Pre-Retirement Seminars were held in Deer Lake, Gander and three in St. John's over the Fall 2023.
- Programs and Services staff provided a Financial Wellness presentation at the Conception Bay South Branch on November 8, 2023.
- Education Week 2024 will be held March 17-22 with the theme Planting Positivity/Semer la Positivité. The week will include a social media contest for members and schools, an art contest for grades K-6 and a proclamation signing with the Minister of Education. Teachers will be provided with items for their students/classes and the NLTA is partnering with School Sport NL again this year for Dart Outdoors as well as Agriculture in the Classroom to provide relevant resources for the week.
- Programs and Services staff have assisted numerous teachers during Fall 2023-24 in drafting correspondence re: class size and composition and inadequate resources that prevent them from effectively delivering curriculum and ensuring a safe and effective teaching and learning environment despite their best efforts as caring and competent professionals. In at least one case, additional allocations have followed.
- In early Fall 2023, Programs and Services have assisted and are working with teachers in situations where the right to refuse unsafe work is being considered or exercised. Staff have provided advice on incidents of violence in the classroom, rights, responsibilities, and options. Several such refusals are still ongoing in January 2024.
- Administrative Officers are assisting and representing a number of teachers in discipline investigations as of January 2024.



- ATIPP requests for information related to violent incidents at two schools were submitted in 2022-23. Some disclosure was received in September 2023, but the NLTA filed for a review by the OIPC in October to ensure that the exemption cited to prevent release of other materials was properly applied. The exemption due to ongoing law enforcement matters was upheld by the OIPC but this file remains active as of January 2024. Further disclosure will be sought once law enforcement matters have concluded.
- An Administrative Officer attended a virtual meeting of the CTF Francophone Symposium with francophone liaison counterparts as part of CTF initiatives in French First Language Education on November 16, 2023. A second meeting is scheduled for May 2024.
- Administrative Officers communicated with CSFP staff in early 2024 to ensure appropriate provision of benefits for substitute and replacement teachers.
- An Administrative Officer prepared an article for the November/December 2023 edition of *The Bulletin* to assist members in accurately estimating retirement income.
- Programs & Services will have articles on reporting workplace violence, the basics of workplace accommodations and the DSLP in the January/February 2024 edition of *The Bulletin*.
- In preparation for Labrador Benefits Agreement negotiations, the Association is exploring providers and cost for conducting a cost-of-living analysis for the various regions of Labrador, with the goal of cost-sharing such a project with the other unions covered by this agreement.
- Two Beginning Teachers' Conferences have been held, one on December 2-3, 2023, in St. John's and a second January 13-14, 2024, in Deer Lake. A third conference is scheduled for Goose Bay in February 2024.
- A Mid-Career Financial Information Seminar is being arranged for Clarenbridge and for Exploits Valley branches in Spring 2024.
- Programs and Services staff is providing a Financial Wellness presentation virtually to Waterford Valley Branch on January 24, 2024 and in person on January 31, 2024.

## Priority #4: Retention, Recruitment and Resourcing

Goal: To address teacher retention and recruitment challenges and proper resourcing of public education through advocating for effective and appropriate Government/employer action and investment, and through promoting the teaching profession and public education

- The Labrador West Recruitment and Retention Committee (as per the Labrador West Collective Agreement) met via Zoom in August 2023. In attendance for the Association were the Executive Director and the Labrador West Branch President. The main focus for discussion was planning for focus groups to be conducted in follow up to the member survey carried out last year. Since then, the Department initiated the idea of a Teachers Think Tank and ongoing work related to NLESD integration has created some challenges in moving this forward. The Association continues to prioritize a Labrador West focus within efforts to address recruitment and retention with a view to moving forward early in 2024. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2024.
- Throughout the Fall of 2023, the NLTA had several meetings with DOE officials regarding the upcoming Teacher Think Tank event. The draft Questionnaire, which will be sent to members in early 2024, has been finalized. The working committee continues to work on details of the virtual Think Tank event that will be held in early 2024, following the completion of the membership questionnaire. The Think Tank will focus on recruitment and retention, with the ultimate goal of developing an action plan to address areas of concern.
- Confirmation was received early in January 2024 that the Think Tank Questionnaire would be distributed to teachers (electronically) for completion beginning on January 17, 2024 and will remain available for 3 weeks. This has been delayed a bit by translation. This will be followed by a Think Tank Virtual Session on February 23. Participants will include officials from Government (including the Premier and the Minister of Education), NLTA representatives (including teachers) and other invited guests. The agenda and attendee list are under development.
- Recruitment, retention and resourcing issues continued to be a consideration in bargaining during Fall 2023. A number of provisions were negotiated as a result (e.g. committee, isolation pay improvements, changes to hiring process.)
- Two Beginning Teachers' Conferences have been held, one on December 2-3, 2023, in St. John's and a second January 13-14, 2024, in Deer Lake. A third conference is scheduled for Goose Bay in February 2024.

- The NLTA, a proud sponsor of the Kids Eat Smart Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, participated in the recent KES Radiothon on November 8, 2023. President Trent Langdon was joined by Executive Members Angela Dawe and Lynette Snook. NLTA sponsorship of KES is publicly acknowledged and part of efforts to promote the profession.
- On November 20, 2023, the latest Teachers Change Lives story was released, featuring Lindsay Hellings, a teacher at Amos Comenius Memorial School in Hopedale. Lindsay taught herself braille to help teach her visually impaired student how to read. One of our videos for this campaign is offered with descriptive video for people with vision loss. The campaign will run for four weeks on TV, in cinema and on social media. Responses has been very positive.
- The most recent Teacher Induction Ceremony for new MUN Faculty of Education graduates was held on October 19, 2023. The next one will take place in Spring 2024.
- Production of the next Teachers Change Lives story is underway for Winter 2024. This campaign continues to be a key component of NLTA efforts to both promote the profession and encourage those who are considering becoming teachers.
- February 11-18, 2024, is Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week, sponsored by the Canadian Home and School Federation. The Association will hold a social media contest during that week, encouraging teachers, school communities and students to post the good work happening in schools by teachers.
- The President and Executive Director met with the new Dean of the MUN Faculty of Education on January 10, 2024. Discussion included the topics of recruiting more students to the Faculty and making teacher training programs more easily accessible for interested individuals living in rural/remote areas.
- The Teacher Certification Committee met on January 18, 2024 at the NLTA offices. Discussions included the importance of potential changes to regulations that would improve/enhance certification upgrade options.

## Priority #5: Advocacy on and Response to Government Initiatives

Goal: To take actions, through meaningful consultation and advocacy efforts, to ensure that the development and implementation of Government policy, reports and decisions that impact public education are informed by and in keeping with NLTA objectives and the interests of members

- The Executive Director met with the Deputy Minister for Education Transformation on November 8, 2023. The DM has a team of three individuals working with him. An advisory committee for transformation will be established and will include NLTA representation. Further detail is expected in early 2024.
- In late August and mid-November 2023, the NLTA was consulted and provided feedback to the DOE on proposed adjustments to current NLESD policy intended to reflect the integration of the District into the DOE. While all the proposed changes are, at this stage, technical in nature (for example, changes in titles, etc.), NLTA flagged policies on secure schools and lockdown procedures for more substantive review and consultation moving forward.
- Programs and Services staff assisted/advised several members who expressed concern about the “Kids in the Know” training during early Fall 2023. The Association has since been granted representation at the provincial table for consultation on subsequent roll out plans for this program in K-9 that will take place over the next 2 years.
- On October 5, 2023, the NLTA social media campaign #HiddenRealityNL was relaunched, using actual quotes from members to highlight the reality in schools. The timing of the campaign coincided with World Teachers’ Day and to raise awareness and increase pressure on government leading into the resumption of negotiations and the reopening of the House of Assembly for the Fall session. A number of parents reached out in response to the campaign and the Association was able to use several of their quotes in the social media aspect of the campaign.
- The Association is working with M5 to develop a campaign to run in February/March 2024 that highlights the current struggles in the classroom (i.e.: workload, violence, lack of resources). The timing of the campaign will coincide with the Teacher Think Tank, as well as the Provincial Budget and potential (rumoured) call for a Spring 2024 Provincial Election.
- The President and Executive Director have participated in a teleconference meeting with DOE officials in September, October, November 2023 and January 2024 in advance of the release of updates on the NLESD integration.
- In response to changes to the guidelines for comprehensive assessments which now require lead assessors to complete hearing and vision screeners, Programs and Services staff have

filed two ATIPP requests. The report from one of these requests has resulted in the filing of a policy grievance (failure to consult).

- Throughout the Fall of 2023, the NLTA had several meetings with DOE officials regarding the upcoming Teacher Think Tank event. The draft Questionnaire, which will be sent to members in early 2024, has been finalized. The working committee continues to work on details of the virtual Think Tank event that will be held in early 2024, following the completion of the membership questionnaire. The Think Tank will focus on recruitment and retention, with the ultimate goal of developing an action plan to address areas of concern.
- Confirmation was received early in January 2024 that the Think Tank Questionnaire would be distributed to teachers (electronically) for completion beginning on January 17, 2024 and will remain available for 3 weeks. This has been delayed a bit by translation. This will be followed by a Think Tank Virtual Session on February 23, 2024. Participants will include officials from Government (including the Premier and the Minister of Education), NLTA representatives (including teachers) and other invited guests. The agenda and attendee list are under development.
- The recently ratified Collective Agreement (2022-2026) contains a provision requiring an Advisory Committee established within 120 days of the signing of this Agreement for the purpose of considering the appropriateness and feasibility of implementing recommendations from the Teacher Allocation Review Committee Report, released October 14, 2022.
- The Association is working on and will submit a pre-Budget submission to government early in 2024. That submission will focus on the lack of resources in the classroom and the concerns being raised by teachers. The submission will ask government to make spending on Education a priority in the 2024 Budget. Once completed and submitted to government, the submission will be shared with the membership.
- The Teacher Certification Committee met on January 18, 2024, at the NLTA offices. Discussions included the importance of potential changes to regulations that would improve/enhance certification upgrade options.