

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association



Priorities for 2023-25

Joint Council

December 1-2, 2023

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.
- On September 22-23, 2023, the President and Assistant Executive Director attended SAC Provincial Executive/Regional Presidents meeting in Grand Falls. A number of topics were discussed including administrator and teacher workload, recruitment and retention of administrators and professional learning for administrators.
- On October 4, 2023, an Administrative Officer assisted in the delivery of an information session for MUN Education students on becoming an Emergency Supply teacher.
- On October 5, 2023, an Administrative Officer met with the presidents of all Special Interest Councils to discuss the importance initiatives Councils may undertake to support teachers.
- A Leadership Seminar for Presidents of all Special Interest Councils (and one other Executive member) was hosted by the NLTA Administrative Staff contact for SICs on November 7-8, 2023.
- Programs and Services staff wrote an article for the first edition of *The Bulletin* for 2023-24 advising caution/careful consideration when it comes to volunteering for extra-curricular activities and to be cognizant of not taking on an extra-curricular workload that would cause them stress.
- Programs and Services staff have assisted numerous teachers during Fall 2023 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.
- On September 25, 2023, the NLTA Fall campaign for “Invest in our Kids” was relaunched. The “Hidden Reality” television commercial was used as well as social media assets that highlighted the need for more recruitment and retention initiatives in schools throughout the province and the negative impact of teacher shortages on teaching and learning.

- 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.
- On November 8, 2023, the President, Association Staff and teacher members of the School Board/Teacher Liaison Committee met with the employer representatives to discuss a number of issues and concerns, many of which were related to teacher workload.
- 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 will continue to monitor this issue post-integration and advocate for members on any proposed changes moving forward.
- At their next meeting in December 2023, the Teachers' Pension Plan Joint Sponsor Body will consider a proposal to extend (for the current school year) the maximum number of days which a retired teacher can substitute.

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)

- EAP wrote a wellness article for the September/October 2023 edition of *The Bulletin* on 'The Sound of Silence'.
- EAP Coordinators are completing self-directed learning through virtual attendance at the 2023 Suicide Prevention Summit from the Mental Health Academy.
- The volume of teachers requiring EAP support and intervention continues to grow during Fall 2023. 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 wrote an article for the first edition of *The Bulletin* for 2023-24 advising caution/careful consideration when it comes to volunteering for extra-curricular activities and to be cognizant of not taking on an extra-curricular workload that would cause them stress.
- 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 September 20, 2023, President Trent Langdon and an Administrative Officer represented the NLTA at a 'No Space For Hate' rally/counter-protest in St. John's. The rally was organized by community groups in response to local and national anti-2SLGBTQIA+ events taking place the same day. President Langdon spoke at the rally and reiterated the Association's support for programming intended to promote safe & inclusive teaching and learning environments for all members of our school communities.
- The President attended the announcement of the first provincial "Well-Being Week" in September 2023 and EAP Coordinators prepared a supportive message and reminder of EAP services that was emailed to all members early in that week.
- EAP Coordinators prepared a supportive message and reminder of EAP services that was emailed to members on World Mental Health Day (October 10, 2023).
- On October 2-3, 2023, Administrative Officers Darlene Johnson and Bob Johnston hosted CAPTTO PD Officers in St. John's.

- An Administrative Officer wrote an article for the September/October 2023 edition of *The Bulletin* on workplace violence and options for dealing with such situations, including a reminder of the NLTA online Violent Incident Tracking Form.
- 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, 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.
- Discussions commenced in September-October 2023 with DOE officials regarding establishing a Think Tank on teacher retention and recruitment. This was first raised in a meeting between the President and Minister of Education, along with the Executive Director and Deputy Minister, on September 14, 2023. The Executive Director had follow-up meetings with DOE officials on September 21 and October 5. A planning meeting between NLTA, NLESD and DOE representatives took place on October 17, 2023.
- 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, is nearly 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.
- 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 one senator to date (November 2023) and further meetings are being scheduled.

- The Assistant Executive Director and an Administrative Officer attended a training session on the use of Naloxone kits in incidents of known/suspected opioid overdose on September 14, 2023, along with a number of NLESD management staff. The NLESD has indicated that they will be providing the kits to schools, and the Association continues to monitor this matter closely, including consulting with legal counsel as needed.
- 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.
- On October 13, 2023, an Administrative Officer presented a session on *Resiliency for Educators* to Memorial University's French Mentorship cohort.
- EAP Coordinators provided teacher wellness packages to several schools during Fall 2023 as a resource and support for their PD days during these stressful times.
- 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 have been filed with the RNC, RCMP, NLESD and CSFP and all responses are expected to be in 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.
- Early in 2024 (once NLESD integration has occurred) the President will be initiating advocacy efforts for the establishment of a paid orientation program/sessions for newly hired teachers.

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

- On August 9, 2023, the Negotiating Team had a 1-day session with the Employer during which the Association presented its most recent pass. The next session of negotiations took place from October 11-13, inclusive.
- 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 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.
- 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 – Administrative Officers are assisting members as necessary while broader system discussions are ongoing.

- While some permanent teachers have received their guidance allowances on time (September 2023) due to NLTA advocacy/grievances over the past few years, some issues do remain. Employer officials have been advised that, in the absence of addressing these issues in a timely manner, the policy grievance and appropriate individual grievances will proceed to arbitration this year.
- 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 is being used as appropriate in bargaining, and anecdotal submissions have been used in the updated #hiddenreality social media campaign content.
- 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.
- On September 22-23, 2023, the Assistant Executive Director and the President attended SAC Provincial Executive/Regional Presidents meeting in Grand Falls. A number of topics were discussed including administrator and teacher workload, recruitment and retention of administrators and professional learning for administrators.
- The Administrative Officer responsible for Group Insurance completed The Advanced Trust Management Course (ATMS A) in Fall 2023.
- All five Pre-Retirement Seminars were held in Deer Lake, Gander and three in St. John's over the Fall 2023.
- A Mid-Career Financial Information Seminar was held in Labrador West Branch on October 21, 2023 in Labrador City.
- Programs and Services staff provided a Financial Wellness presentation at the Conception Bay South Branch on November 8, 2023.
- Three Branch Leadership sessions were held through the months of October and November 2023. Sessions were held in St. John's (October 13-14), Corner Brook (October 27-28) and Grand Falls (November 3-4). All sessions were well attended and well received.
- Programs and Services staff have assisted numerous teachers during Fall 2023 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.

- Administrative Officers are assisting and representing a number of teachers in complex discipline investigations during Fall 2023.
- ATIPP requests for information related to violent incidents at two schools were submitted in 2022-23. Some disclosure has been 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.
- On October 30, 2023, the Executive Director attended a Regional SAC event hosted by the Vista SAC group where she facilitated a Q/A session with 20 administrators from that region.
- An Administrative Officer attended the annual meeting of la CAFÉ, la Conférence des Associations francophones d'éducation, on November 12-14, 2023. La CAFÉ represents francophone teacher organizations across the country. As part of the session, staff outlined the priorities of the NLTA and presented an overview of French first language education in the province.
- 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 to ensure appropriate application of hiring 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.
- Throughout the month of November 2023, the negotiating process intensified significantly. On November 9, 2023, the Negotiating Team, after 36 combined passes with the employer/government, came to the conclusion that they had reached a point in the process where no better deal could be reached without teachers facing job action. On November 17, 2023, a formal recommendation was made to Provincial Executive in a special meeting that the tentative agreement be put to the membership for a vote. This recommendation was subsequently accepted/passed by Provincial Executive. On November 18, 2023, a special Joint Council meeting was held to present Joint Council with the details of the Tentative Agreement and Joint Council subsequently voted on the wording of the ballot for the December 5-7 ratification vote. Several sessions (in person and virtual, all well-attended) were held to provide members with information regarding the Tentative Agreement and to respond to their questions.

- 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.

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 most recently 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.
- On September 15, 2023, the Assistant Executive Director facilitated a session with 90 secondary pre-service teachers at Memorial University, expressing/highlighting the significance of becoming a teacher and specifically encouraging students to stay/teach in Newfoundland and Labrador upon completion of the degree.
- On September 20, 2023, the Executive Director and Assistant Director had a meeting with the Director of CSFP to discuss the emergency staffing situation currently being experienced at two of the five schools for the district. Subsequent discussions with the Director and Assistant Deputy Minister for the DOE followed in late September/early October to provide feedback and brainstorm ideas to help improve things.
- On September 22-23, 2023, the Assistant Executive Director and the President attended SAC Provincial Executive/Regional Presidents meeting in Grand Falls. A number of topics were discussed including administrator and teacher workload, recruitment and retention of administrators and professional learning for administrators.
- Discussions commenced in September-October 2023 with DOE officials regarding establishing a Think Tank on teacher retention and recruitment. This was first raised in a meeting between the President and Minister of Education, along with the Executive Director and Deputy Minister, on September 14, 2023. The Executive Director had follow-up

meetings with DOE officials on September 21 and October 5, 2023, A planning meeting between NLTA, NLESD and DOE representatives took place on October 17, 2023.

- 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, is nearly finalized. The working committee continues to work on details of the virtual Think Tank event that will be held in early 2024, following the competition 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.
- Programs and Services staff assisted members experiencing issues getting approved on the substitute list in early Fall 2023.
- Recruitment, retention and resourcing issues continued to be a consideration in bargaining during Fall 2023.
- An Administrative Officer met with Assistant Deputy Minister to discuss the importance of supporting new teachers. Two Beginning Teachers' Conferences have been scheduled for December 2023 in St. John's and Labrador. A third conference is scheduled for Deer Lake in January 2024.
- On September 25, 2023, the Fall campaign for Invest in our Kids was relaunched. The Hidden Reality television commercial was used as well as social media assets that highlighted the need for more recruitment and retention initiatives in schools throughout the province.
- 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.
- On October 5, 2023, World Teachers' Day, the Council of Atlantic Provinces and Territory Teachers' Organizations (CAPTTO) issued a joint statement calling on governments and education entities to fulfill their obligation of ensuring that every classroom in every school is provided with adequate resources to meet the complicated and diverse needs of all students. The statement was issued to media and shared on social media by provincial teacher organizations in NL, NS, NB, PEI and Nunavut.
- 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.

- Production of the next Teachers Change Lives story was underway during Fall 2023. This campaign continues to be a key component of NLTA efforts to both promote the profession and encourage those who are considering becoming teachers.
- On October 11, 2023, the Teachers Change Lives campaign was recognized at ICE Awards in Halifax. The ICE Awards celebrate creative excellence in Atlantic Canada. Atlantic Business Magazine organizes the annual awards show to recognize the best in advertising, design, digital, and creativity, inspiring the highest creative bar possible. TCL won Gold and Silver in three categories: Public Service – Digital, Public Service - Integrated Campaign, and Public Service - TV/Broadcast Campaign
- 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.

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

- On August 3, 2023, the Executive Director and Assistant Executive Director met with the Deputy Minister for Education Transformation to discuss early plans for this portfolio. There was an assurance that as the plan is unveiled and implemented, NLTA will be consulted and invited to partner where appropriate. NLTA representatives stressed the point that new initiatives cannot be expected to be successful in the absence of adequate human resources in schools.
- 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.
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- The President and Executive Director have participated in a teleconference meeting with DOE officials in September, October and November 2023, in advance of the release of the monthly updates on the NLESD integration.
- Discussions commenced in September-October 2023 with DOE officials regarding establishing a Think Tank on teacher retention and recruitment. This was first raised in a meeting between the President and Minister of Education, along with the Executive Director and Deputy Minister, on September 14, 2023. The Executive Director had follow-up meetings with DOE officials on September 21 and October 5. A planning meeting between NLTA, NLESD and DOE representatives took place on October 17, 2023.
- 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, is nearly 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.
- The Executive Director met with the Deputy Minister on October 16, 2023, to discuss the legislative agenda for the Fall 2023 sitting of the House of Assembly.
- An Administrative Officer is attending PL sessions on changes to Comprehensive Assessment policies and procedures including hearing and vision screening. Advocacy continues on these proposed changes during Fall 2023.