

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association



Priorities for 2023-25

Provincial Executive

September 20-21, 2024

Priority #1: Workload Concerns

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

- Programs and Services staff assisted numerous teachers during the 2023-24 school year 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.
- Since 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. Refusals were addressed to members' satisfaction.
- A policy grievance (failure to consult) was filed regarding changes to policy which require NLTA members to administer hearing and vision screeners prior to comprehensive assessments. This matter has now been referred for arbitration with hearing dates confirmed for November 2024. The RNUNL has been notified of the arbitration dates as this matter has raised work of the bargaining unit (public health nurses) concerns for them, which they are pursuing as well with the Department of Health & Community Services through their own dispute resolution processes. Several meetings have been held by the parties in an effort to settle the matter with the latest occurring on April 11. Work continues (July-September, 2024) to determine if a resolution is possible.
- The first meeting of the committee established to review the RTL model took place on June 6, 2024. The second meeting is scheduled for a full-day on September 13, 2024.
- Updated data on incidents of violence in schools during 2023-24 was sought via an ATIPP request following the end of the school year. The information was received in August 2024 and staff are working on having the data analyzed to compare to what was previously received, including whether the predicted increase for 2023-24 was accurate. Further decisions around how best to present and use the data will be made following completion of this analysis.
- The 2022-2026 Collective Agreement contains a provision requiring the establishment of an Advisory Committee within 120 days of the signing of this Agreement for the purpose of considering the appropriateness and feasibility of implementing recommendations from the TARC report. Association staff initiated discussions with the Department of Education (March-May 2024) to commence the work of this committee. Due to staffing changes at the Department of Education/NLSchools and CSFP, the initial meeting of this committee was delayed, but the date for the first meeting has been confirmed for October 8, 2024.

- The President had a telephone meeting with Premier Furey in mid-May 2024 to discuss teacher shortages and ideas to address teacher workload and retention/recruitment challenges. This was followed up with correspondence from the President to the Premier on May 29, 2024. Subsequent discussions with NLSchools officials in July 2024 led to a response from the Minister of Education on August 12, 2024, confirming a commitment for some additional resources in several regional “pilot” schools, including introducing a new student services TLA support position in 6 schools for the 2024-25 school year.
- Programs & Services staff have developed and are sharing an explanation with teachers regarding the possibility of a grievance under Article 30 (Class Size) of the collective agreement. Integration of the former NLESD with the Department of Education may make grievances around class size/under resourcing more likely to succeed, depending on the facts of each particular case.
- Association staff have continued to assist members and advocate on their behalf with respect to school resourcing issues over the summer of 2024 and early September. Efforts have led to additional IRT allocation in one school and an extra teacher to split a large class in another.
- A grievance filed by several school administrators in February 2022 alleging the employer breached the collective agreement by imposing unreasonable duties/work expectations during the 2021-22 school year Christmas break was referred to arbitration. However, in August 2024, the Employer and the five administrators, as represented by the NLTA, reached a mutually acceptable settlement with terms which shall govern the future interpretation of Clause 28.01 (a)(ii).
- The Association is working with M5 to review the most recent comments received from parents after the latest Not Okay campaign, which was launched online in May 2024. These comments will be packaged and used in future public awareness campaigns and in correspondence with government officials to advocate for increased resourcing in classrooms.

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 grew steadily during the 2023-24 school year, with roughly 1 in 7 teachers under NLSchools 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. With the addition of a third EAP position, the provision of some workshops will resume during the 2024-2025 school year.
- The third meeting of the School Safety Coalition met at RCMP Headquarters on June 25, 2024. The group was pleased to welcome Rod Jeddore from the Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River as a first-time attendee. Discussion included exploration of ideas for better preventive measures and a presentation from Relationships First on a restorative justice/hubs of service proposal.
- EAP provided intervention and wellness supports to several school(s) in relation to stress, grief/loss and trauma related to tragic incidents affecting their school communities during August 2024.
- EAP Coordinators have prepared an introductory and overview article on EAP supports and services for the September/October 2024 edition of *The Bulletin*.
- Updated data on incidents of violence in schools during 2023-24 was sought via an ATIPP request following the end of the school year. The information was received in August 2024 and staff are working on having the data analyzed to compare to what was previously received, including whether the predicted increase for 2023-24 was accurate. Further decisions around how best to present and use the data will be made following completion of this analysis.
- Association staff continue (September 2024) to assist members with various payroll matters, including issues related to the calculation and payment of recently negotiated bonuses and retroactive salary increases, the expanded eligibility for the isolation allowance and teachers not paid in the first pay period for 2024-25. Meetings between Programs & Services staff and Payroll officials have been ongoing to address problems and advocate for systemic improvements, including during July-August 2024.
- The President wrote to the Auditor General on July 31, 2024, regarding systemic Teacher Payroll concerns and seeking a formal review and audit by the AG. The AG responded on

August 9, which led to a telephone meeting between the AG, the President and the Executive Director on August 23, 2024. While the AG confirmed that Teacher Payroll will be considered for an audit, she advised that this could take some time (over a year) as there are already a number of other matters in the queue. In an effort to prioritize this matter with the office of the AG, the President subsequently wrote to MHA Pleaman Forsey, chair of the government Public Accounts Committee, on September 5, 2024, asking that the Committee direct the AG to conduct an audit of Teacher Payroll. MHA Forsey has responded, indicating that this matter will be on the agenda for the next Committee in the fall of 2024, and the Association has asked to be informed when a date for that meeting has been set.

- EAP for Teachers hosted a conference ‘Navigating the Path of Wellness Together’ for EAP and Counsellors for Teachers from the Atlantic provinces in June 2024 in St. John’s with a focus on teacher wellness and self-compassion in education.
- The Association facilitated and attended a meeting with Department of Education officials for representatives of the PIE SIC on June 3, 2024. PIE presented research and suggestions to improve the recruitment and retention of school psychologists. It was confirmed during this meeting that NLTA advocacy has been successful in leading to regulatory changes to create a path to level VII certification for all school psychologists, and to update terminology in regulations to refer to “school”, as opposed to “educational” psychologists.
- The September/October edition of *The Bulletin* will feature an article relating to workplace violence and abuse.
- The Association is working with M5 to review the most recent comments received from parents after the latest Not Okay campaign, which was launched online in May 2024. These comments will be packaged and used in future public awareness campaigns and in correspondence with government officials to advocate for increased resourcing in classrooms.
- The Association is in the early production phase of the Fall 2024 Teachers Change Lives campaign. Work is ongoing to select a teacher to highlight in the upcoming campaign.
- On July 22, 2024, President Langdon joined teachers and community members in Gander to celebrate pride and support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- In late August 2024, NLTA staff advocated on behalf of teachers at Bayview Academy, which experienced significant damage due to flooding over the summer, for extra “non-contact” time to allow for preparation/planning given their circumstances. This advocacy did result in an extra day of preparation time being granted to the staff prior to students’ returning.

- Programs & Services staff are actively (August-September 2024) advocating with government officials for the continuation of the policy to not require medical documentation from teachers for periods of absence (up to 14 days) for COVID-19 and/or related symptoms.
- NLTA staff continue (September 2024) efforts to have the employer implement a system that would allow members to have individual, “self-service” access to personal leave accrual and usage information. The new Letter #12 in the collective agreement requires the employer to explore this. Teacher Payroll officials have advised that this functionality has been included in ongoing investigations into a new payroll system to replace TCAS but, in the interim the possibility of other options are being explored (for example SmartFind, monthly balance updates ...). The Association is also exploring whether a complaint regarding privacy concerns to the OIPC could lead to this issue being expedited.
- The information and application form for the newly established NLTA Benevolent Grants has been added to the NLTA website.
- Planning is underway for three Beginning Teachers’ Conferences to be held across the province in November and December 2024.
- The President participated in numerous media interviews (12 from August 27-September 9, 2024), speaking out on various issues including: vacant teacher positions (particularly in Labrador); cell phones in schools; return to school issues; lack of supports for students with special needs; under-resourcing of schools; pilot SS TLA positions; and, new funding for school lunch programs.

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

- Association staff continue (September 2024) to assist members with various payroll matters, including issues related to the calculation and payment of recently negotiated bonuses and retroactive salary increases, the expanded eligibility for the isolation allowance and teachers not paid in the first pay period for 2024-25. Meetings between Programs & Services staff and Payroll officials have been ongoing to address problems and advocate for systemic improvements, including during July-August 2024.
- The President wrote to the Auditor General on July 31, 2024, regarding systemic Teacher Payroll concerns and seeking a formal review and audit by the AG. The AG responded on August 9, which led to a telephone meeting between the AG, the President and the Executive Director on August 23, 2024. While the AG confirmed that Teacher Payroll will be considered for an audit, she advised that this could take some time (over a year) as there are already a number of other matters in the queue. In an effort to prioritize this matter with the office of the AG, the President subsequently wrote to MHA Pleaman Forsey, chair of the government Public Accounts Committee, on September 5, 2024, asking that the Committee direct the AG to conduct an audit of Teacher Payroll. MHA Forsey has responded, indicating that this matter will be on the agenda for the next Committee in the fall of 2024, and the Association has asked to be informed when a date for that meeting has been set.
- Programs & Services staff have developed and are sharing an explanation with teachers regarding the possibility of a grievance under Article 30 (Class Size) of the collective agreement. Integration of the former NLESD with the Department of Education may make grievances around class size/under resourcing more likely to succeed, depending on the facts of each particular case.
- Association staff have continued to assist members and advocate on their behalf with respect to school resourcing issues over the summer of 2024 and early September. Efforts have led to additional IRT allocation in one school and an extra teacher to split a large class in another.
- Since 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. Refusals were addressed to members' satisfaction.
- Administrative Officers are assisting and representing a number of teachers in discipline investigations over the summer and into September 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 September 2024. Further disclosure will be sought once law enforcement matters have concluded.
- Programs & Services assisted members with a number of requests for workplace accommodations throughout the 2023-24 school year and during the 2024 staffing season.
- Programs and Services staff provided a Financial Wellness presentation at Riverwood Academy on June 3, 2024.
- Programs and Services staff provided presentations on Financial Wellness and the Collective Agreement for New Administrators at the SAC Provincial Conference on May 29, 2024.
- The Assistant Executive Director and an Administrative Officer met with HR officials from NLSchools in January 2024 in an effort to clarify the parameters used by NLSchools in the consideration of equivalency in the assessment of qualifications. Discussions on this issue were ongoing as of May 2024 and have continued during the 2024 staffing season and into September 2024. There is a grievance on an equivalency matter that has been moved to arbitration, currently in the process of appointing nominees to the arbitration panel.
- As of the end of August 2024, NLTA staff continue to receive and respond to a high volume of contact from the membership re: a wide variety of issues (eg. workload, discipline/allegations investigations, matters leading to potential grievance, payroll problems, etc.). Hiring matters tend to be the main focus during the hiring season, however.
- Programs and Services staff have assisted a high volume of questions/calls/emails related to Recognition Bonus and Retroactive Pay coming out of the new Collective Agreement. This has required a substantial amount of communication with government and payroll offices. While most issues have been addressed, this work is ongoing as of September 2024. The major systemic issue outstanding relates to eligibility for the recognition bonus for a number of teachers who commenced sick leave prior to August 20, 2022, and who are still on leave. Legal counsel has been sought.
- The Unions involved in Labrador Benefits Agreement negotiations are seeking input from their respective memberships. NLTA received survey responses from 66 members in Labrador and are compiling the results of that survey as of May 2024 for use in future discussions with the multi-union bargaining team.
- Communications with other unions who are party to the Labrador Benefits Agreement have been ongoing during the summer and into September 2024. A meeting of the full group is expected to occur in late September/early October 2024 to discuss input from membership surveys, opening proposals, and bargaining strategy.
- NLTA staff continue (September 2024) efforts to have the employer implement a system that would allow members to have individual, “self-service” access to personal leave accrual and

usage information. The new Letter #12 in the collective agreement requires the employer to explore this. Teacher Payroll officials have advised that this functionality has been included in ongoing investigations into a new payroll system to replace TCAS but, in the interim the possibility of other options are being explored (for example SmartFind, monthly balance updates ...). The Association is also exploring whether a complaint regarding privacy concerns to the OIPC could lead to this issue being expedited.

- Programs and Services staff prepared an article for the May/June 2024 edition of *The Bulletin* on collective agreement provisions addressing teaching assignments and consultation.
- Group Insurance Managers held their Summer Planning Conference August 18-19, 2024 in St. John's. Sessions included presentations from Johnson, Manulife, Beneva and O'Dea/Earle. These meetings were followed by the regular Group Insurance Committee and Manager meetings on August 20.
- Throughout the summer (2024), NLTA staff assisted a significant number of members with issues related to hiring, payroll, discipline investigations, etc. While final information is not yet available from the Employer regarding the Seniority Transfer Round (New MOU in Collective Agreement), anecdotally, there is a sense that the new provisions contained in the MOU did create some efficiencies during the transfer process.
- On July 17, 2024, NLTA coordinated a meeting between Government Payroll and Johnsons to address issues related to premium deductions and how errors might be reduced. Work on this is ongoing.
- Programs & Services staff are actively (August-September 2024) advocating with government officials for the continuation of the policy to not require medical documentation from teachers for periods of absence (up to 14 days) for COVID-19 and/or related symptoms.
- Programs & Services staff will have articles in the September/October 2024 edition of *The Bulletin* on information for substitute teachers and OHS/workplace violence.
- Administrative Officers are in the planning stages of the 2024/2025 SIC Leadership Seminar set to take place in October 2024. Two members of the Executive of each of our 17 Special Interest Councils will be invited to attend this seminar.
- Three Branch Leadership Seminars will take place during Fall 2024 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Gander, and St. John's. Adjustments were made to the dates for the Labrador session in order to accommodate travel and leave challenges for certain attendees.

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 Association worked with Thinkwell Research to conduct the focus groups for the Labrador West Recruitment and Retention Committee, which occurred in June 2024. The goal of the research is to fine-tune understanding of recruitment and retention challenges specific to the Labrador West region, as well as to discuss possible solutions for improving the recruitment and retention of teachers in this area. Some unavoidable delays occurred over the summer of 2024 but a report back on the results is being prepared (September 2024) and an extension for the mandate of the Committee has been confirmed. The final report and recommendations from this Committee will be shared with and further considered by the provincial committee established pursuant to Letter #11 of the 2022-26 Collective Agreement.
- The next Teacher Induction Ceremonies for new MUN Faculty of Education graduates will take place on October 17, 2024, with the second planned for May 2025.
- Discussions between NLTA staff and Teacher Certification are ongoing regarding the importance of potential changes to regulations that would improve/enhance certification upgrade options, up to and including a meeting on May 23, 2024, regarding proposed regulatory amendments. The issue of programs recognized for upgrading will be on the agenda for the next Teacher Certification Committee meeting to be scheduled for Fall 2024.
- During a meeting with Department of Education officials for representatives of the PIE SIC on June 3, 2024, it was confirmed that NLTA advocacy has been successful in leading to regulatory changes to create a path to level VII certification for all school psychologists, and to update terminology in regulations to refer to “school”, as opposed to “educational” psychologists.
- Updated data on incidents of violence in schools during 2023-24 was sought via an ATIPP request following the end of the school year. The information was received in August 2024 and staff are working on having the data analyzed to compare to what was previously received, including whether the predicted increase for 2023-24 was accurate. Further decisions around how best to present and use the data will be made following completion of this analysis.

- The first meeting of the provincial Teacher Recruitment and Retention Committee (Letter #11 of the 2022-26 Collective Agreement) took place on June 19, 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2024.
- The President had a telephone meeting with Premier Furey in mid-May 2024 to discuss teacher shortages and ideas to address teacher workload and retention/recruitment challenges. This was followed up with correspondence from the President to the Premier on May 29, 2024. Subsequent discussions with NLSchools officials in July 2024 led to a response from the Minister of Education on August 12, 2024, confirming a commitment for some additional resources in several regional “pilot” schools, including introducing a new student services TLA support position in 6 schools for the 2024-25 school year.
- The Association is working with M5 to review the most recent comments received from parents after the most recent Not Okay campaign, which was launched online in May 2024. These comments will be packaged and used in future public awareness campaigns and in correspondence with government officials to advocate for increased resourcing in classrooms.
- The Association is in the early production phase of the Fall 2024 Teachers Change Lives campaign. Work is ongoing to select a teacher to highlight in the upcoming campaign.
- At the end of the 2023-24 school year, the Association submitted Access to Information Requests to NLSchools, CSFP, the RNC and the RCMP to determine the number of violent incidents recorded for the most recent school year. That information has been received and MQO is currently working on the analysis. Once that work is completed, the Association will determine the best use of the information.
- Administrative officers presented to MUN Education classes (July 24, 2024 and September 13 & 17, 2024) on topics such as NLTA Code of Ethics, Collegiality, Social Media, teaching in NL and general information about the NLTA.
- Planning is underway for three Beginning Teachers’ Conferences to be held across the province in November and December 2024.
- Discussions are ongoing (September 2024) with the MUN Faculty of Education regarding the NLTA continuing to partner with them on providing a “mini-conference” for soon-to-graduate student teachers, the first of which was held in April 2024 and was received very positively.

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 first meeting of the advisory committee for Education Transformation was held on February 1, 2024. During discussions, the Executive Director stressed the importance of adequate human resourcing to the success of current programs and any new initiatives. A call for expressions of interest from teachers to serve on working groups went out in March 2024, with a very good response rate from NLTA members looking to be involved. The Executive Director and Deputy Minister for Education Transformation met twice in April to discuss working group composition. Dates were being explored for the next advisory committee meeting before the end of the 2023-24 school year.
- The DOE Education Transformation project was incorporated as one of the “pillars” of the Education Accord NL – the former advisory committee was replaced with a pillar committee, the members of which include (among others) a number of teachers and the NLTA Executive Director. The Executive Director attended pillar committee meetings on July 8 and September 9, 2024, with twice-monthly meetings scheduled up until December 2024. To date, the focus has been on finalizing the pillar “vision statement”, receiving updates from working groups and reviewing the interim pillar report to the Accord on emerging themes. The Executive Director met separately with the Deputy Minister for Education Transformation to review and discuss the draft interim pillar report on September 13, 2024.
- A policy grievance (failure to consult) was filed regarding changes to policy which require NLTA members to administer hearing and vision screeners prior to comprehensive assessments. This matter has now been referred for arbitration with hearing dates confirmed for November 2024. The RNUNL has been notified of the arbitration dates as this matter has raised work of the bargaining unit (public health nurses) concerns for them, which they are pursuing as well with the Department of Health & Community Services through their own dispute resolution processes. Several meetings have been held by the parties in an effort to settle the matter with the latest occurring on April 11. Work continues (July-September 2024) to determine if a resolution is possible.
- The 2022-2026 Collective Agreement contains a provision requiring the establishment of an Advisory Committee within 120 days of the signing of this Agreement for the purpose of considering the appropriateness and feasibility of implementing recommendations from the TARC report. Association staff initiated discussions with the Department of Education (March-May 2024) to commence the work of this committee. Due to staffing changes at the

Department of Education/NLSchools and CSFP, the initial meeting of this committee was delayed, but the date for the first meeting has been confirmed for October 8, 2024.

- Discussions between NLTA staff and Teacher Certification are ongoing regarding the importance of potential changes to regulations that would improve/enhance certification upgrade options, up to and including a meeting on May 23, 2024, regarding proposed regulatory amendments. The issue of programs recognized for upgrading will be on the agenda for the next Teacher Certification Committee meeting to be scheduled for Fall 2024.
- A second meeting with the Education Accord chairpersons, planned for April 4, 2024, had to be postponed and has not been rescheduled. The President attended the inaugural meeting of the Accord Advisory Committee on April 16, 2024, followed by meetings on May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20 and September 17, 2024, with future monthly meetings scheduled.
- On April 19, 2024, an Administrative Officer met with DOE Student Services staff and were advised that there are changes upcoming to the Safe and Caring Schools Policy. The Association has requested consultation at all stages, including during a meeting between the Deputy Minister and Executive Director on July 3, 2024.
- The Association has reminded the DOE of the obligation for consultation with NLTA regarding ongoing plans during 2024-25 for policy development regarding AI in education and the use of cell phones in schools.
- The Association is working with M5 to review the most recent comments received from parents after the most recent Not Okay campaign, which was launched online in May 2024. These comments will be packaged and used in future public awareness campaigns and in correspondence with government officials to advocate for increased resourcing in classrooms.
- At the end of the 2023-24 school year, the Association submitted Access to Information Requests to NLSchools, CSFP, the RNC and the RCMP to determine the number of violent incidents recorded for the most recent school year. That information has been received and MQO is currently working on the analysis. Once that work is completed, the Association will determine the best use of the information.
- The first meeting of the committee established to review the RTL model took place on June 6, 2024. The second meeting is scheduled for a full-day on September 13, 2024.
- The President and Executive Director met with Treasury Board Secretariat, NLSchools and Public Service Commission representatives on September 5, 2024, to consult on proposed changes to government policy on the prevention and response to workplace harassment. NLTA will be provided with a copy of proposed policy changes for review and feedback.
- The President participated in numerous media interviews (12 from August 27-September 9, 2024), speaking out on various issues including: vacant teacher positions (particularly in Labrador); cell phones in schools; return to school issues; lack of supports for students with special needs; under-resourcing of schools; pilot SS TLA positions; and new funding for school lunch programs.