

# Annual Report

2013 - 2014

Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils

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## 2013 – 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nathan Whalen, President (2013 – 2015) | St. John's, NL

Terry Green, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President (2013 – 2014) | Grand Falls-Windsor, NL

Paulette Grimes, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President (2013 – 2015) | Grand Falls-Windsor, NL

Peter Whittle, Secretary (2012 – 2014) | St. John's, NL

Michele Peach, Treasurer | Mount Pearl, NL (Appointed)

Ruby Hoskins, Past President | Marystown, NL (Appointed)

## INTRODUCTION

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils (NLFSC) is the provincial umbrella group for parents, teachers, high school students (where applicable), and community supporters who are committed to enhancing the quality of school programs and improving the levels of student achievement in our schools. The Federation provides School Councils and parent groups with a voice on educational issues and encourages parental involvement at all levels of education.

NLFSC is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Membership School Councils, school-based parent groups, Home and School Associations, Parent-Teacher Associations and Parent Advisory Committees. Membership is optional and renewed annually.

As a major stakeholder in education, the NLFSC continues to work on issues affecting its membership and often seeks to provide input into policy and programs that have an impact on school communities. NLFSC is working to strengthen communication between the Department of Education, School Districts, the Federation, and School Councils. NLFSC works with these educational partners to bring areas of concern to the attention of many organizations, most frequently of which are Departments of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The founding meeting of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Home & School and Parent-Teacher Associations was held in Gander on Saturday, October 20, 1979. The Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation was incorporated on July 5, 1994, under the Corporations Act, Revised Statutes of Newfoundland, 1990, Chapter C-36, Section 420. On August 30, 1999, the Articles of Incorporation were amended and the name was changed to “The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, Inc.”

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils strives for excellence in education for all children in Newfoundland and Labrador and acts as a collective voice for School Councils and for all parents/guardians. The Federation provides leadership, representation, and services to all volunteers involved with School Councils and parent organizations. The Federation provides parents/guardians with a voice on educational issues and encourages parental/guardian involvement at all levels of education.

“Education gives every child an opportunity to succeed and is society’s greatest equalizer. As a Federation, our aim is to provide School Councils and members of the public with information and resources surrounding the state of education in Newfoundland and Labrador. We also empower School Councils with a voice to advocate on behalf of our students and allow them to achieve their best.”

Nathan Whalen, NLFSC President (May 2013)

## 2013 – 2014 PROVINCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

### 2013 Meeting of the Atlantic Caucus Home & School and School Councils Federation in PEI

Top from left to right: Shirley Smedley Jay (PEI), Peter Rukavina (PEI), Glyn Morgan (NB)

Bottom from left to right: Pam Montgomery (PEI), Charla Dorrington (NS), Nathan Whalen (NL), Cynthia Richards (NB)



### 2012 School Council Person of the Year Award

Lois Vokey of St. Michael's Regional High School receives the 2013 School Council Person of the Year Award at a special school assembly and pep rally with more than 200 individuals in attendance.

### Safe and Caring Schools Policy Launch

President Whalen represented School Councils at the launch of the revised Provincial Safe and Caring Schools Policy with other education stakeholders.



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I bring greetings on behalf of our Board of Directors after my first year as President of our Federation. We have had the opportunity to improve our relationship with School Councils and school-supporting organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador to advance our policy objectives expressed by parents, students, and teachers.

### Our Role Has Never Been Greater

With the transition from five school districts to two, the role of School Council in advising the School Board on matters of concern to their school and community has never been more critical. We have a larger role to play to ensure that our schools have adequate resources to support the school development plan and we certainly need to regain our focus on parent and community engagement within our school communities. This will only occur with passionate and dedicated volunteers like yourself.

### Our Children Need Us Now More Than Ever

We have worked tirelessly to advocate on your behalf for the human resources that are required to see our students achieve their true potential. We have heard you loud and clear that our current system is failing our children. We need more Instructional Resource Teachers (IRT), specialist teachers, administrators, guidance counsellors, mental health and addictions supports, and regular classroom teachers to support the overwhelming needs that our schools are faced with on a daily basis.

This past year we have partnered with organizations such as the NL Teachers' Association, Department of Education, NL English School District, and dozens of others to advance our mission. We have also worked to raise public awareness of issues facing education through frequent media interviews, talk show appearances, letters to the editor, and speaking with parents across Newfoundland and Labrador.

### My Ask

We have much more work to do in order to advance education in our province so that our children and our province can flourish well into the future. We will only achieve this by working together and by putting education as a top priority for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask that throughout the 2014-2015 school year you help us break this culture of silence and get talking about what is happening in our school communities.

Let's talk about inclusion. Let's talk about mental health. Let's talk about guidance. Let's talk about our administrators and instructional leadership. Most importantly, let's talk about education.

It is with your support, communication, and hard work that we will make School Councils and the issues faced by our schools more prominent than ever before. Please reach out to us and lend your expertise and experiences this year as we launch our 35<sup>th</sup> year of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils.

Thank you for being a strong leader for education in your school community.

Nathan Whalen  
President  
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I am pleased to provide the Executive Director's Message for the 2013-14 Annual Report of the NLFSC. This report outlines the activities of our operation over the past year and will enable members to review the activities that the Federation has undertaken on behalf of School Councils.

NLFSC supports networking among Councils. This entails maintaining the connection between the Federation and each individual Council, as well as the connection all School Councils have with each other for information sharing, decision-making, and support.

We truly value the partnership and working relationship between NLFSC and other education stakeholders. By working with professionals who are leaders in their field and by building partnerships with some of the best and most revered organizations in the Province, we will be able to further enrich the whole child, entire schools, and communities across the province.

This marks my second full year as Executive Director for the NLFSC. Along with the Board of Directors and our membership, I have been very active as we continue with the NLFSC objective to provide a forum for school-based groups to communicate with each other.

Our membership is truly committed to enhancing the quality of education for their children. This is very evident in our daily operations, which includes telephone calls, letters, and e-mails from School Council members, parents, and educators on issues such as bullying, mental health and addictions, school closures, math and literacy, school maintenance, teacher and guidance allocations and the School Council role and functions. A powerful, united, energetic Federation can be an influential voice for education and a catalyst for uniting the support and power of the province on behalf of our students and schools.

Very few resources have been allocated to providing training to school councils since they were legislated into existence and left to evolve on their own. There are also many misconceptions about the School Council role; however, with the merging of five School Districts into two (English and French) it is critical that School Councils continue to take a leadership role in the education system. These are electrifying times for School Councils in this province. The changes, cuts, and exploding political attention and focus on education present real opportunity for us to become a more inclusive, responsive, and effective organization.

As NLFSC continues to work on behalf of our students and schools, the next few years will also prove to be interesting and challenging. There is still much work to be done and the voice of parents and the positive role of School Councils in education are of utmost importance.

Over the past year, working with member School Councils through our newsletter "The Cuffer," via e-mail, NLFSC listserv, face-to-face exchanges and by phone, has been very satisfying and rewarding. Providing our membership with information and assistance in understanding the challenges and opportunities in education is a fulfilling part of my job. My office maintains regular communications with other key education stakeholders including officials from the Department of Education, NL Teachers' Association, Memorial University of Newfoundland, School Districts, and other agencies.

I am very pleased to work with a Board of Directors that is committed to enhancing the education system. Without their great investment of time and effort, the NLFSC would not be the successful group we are today and I definitely could not carry out my job as Executive Director without their support.

Congratulations to President Nathan Whalen for the outstanding leadership he has shown to NLFSC over the past year. Thank you to 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President Terry Green; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President Paulette Grimes; Secretary Peter Whittle, and Past President Ruby Hoskins for their input, advice, support and encouragement over the past year.

I would also like to thank our Treasurer Michele Peach for managing and overseeing our finances. Without her volunteer support, the extent of which we have accomplished over the past year would not be possible.

On behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils Executive, I wish to express my appreciation to the School Councils across this province for your continued leadership, advice and support. You have provided us with valuable feedback on various issues facing School Councils. The dedication and professionalism with which you continue to serve your communities is admirable.

I hope you enjoy this Annual Report. It summarizes the work, on your behalf, of the Federation and provides a comprehensive breakdown of our advocacy activities for School Councils of the province.

I look forward to continuing to work on your behalf in the coming year.

Denise Pike  
Executive Director  
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership provides the opportunity for individual School Councils to raise their voices with others throughout the province on issues and concerns with our public education system. It is important to recognize that the success of all efforts in our organization must rely on the value that NLFSC can bring to members, whether the school community is an active participant in programming or not.

In order for NLFSC to continue to be an effective voice, it must maintain a high level of member participation and awareness. Membership ensures that your Council's voice is heard on issues that affect our students. It also provides an opportunity to promote the importance of parent education, communication, and leadership development. Getting involved with School Councils and the Federation builds skills in leadership, communication, and advocacy.

Membership stability and growth is extremely important to the continued success of NLFSC and we are pleased to report that our membership has increased significantly over the past year. To ensure our success please keep your membership up to date.

Membership stability and growth is extremely important to the continued success of NLFSC. In 2010-11 our active membership was at 35 per cent of the total School Councils that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador. This year we are pleased to report that number has increased to surpass 90 per cent.

## COMMUNICATION

The President is as the official spokesperson for the Federation and is often pursued by the media. Over the past year NLFSC President Whalen conducted countless media interviews (newspaper, radio and television), on issues that were current at the time.

Nathan has been very vocal about issues affecting our membership, schools and students.

Some of the topics he championed include:

- Negative Impact of Cuts to Teacher & Guidance Allocations
- School District Consolidation
- Need for Openness, Accountability, and Transparency in Education
- Importance of School Council Empowerment
- Inclusive Learning Model of Education
- Provincial High School Graduation Rate
- Bullying & Violence Prevention
- Mental Health & Addictions Among Youth
- Safe and Caring Schools Policy
- Math & Numeracy Challenges
- The Gender Achievement Gap
- School Transportation
- Special Services Teacher Allocation
- School Climate Survey Results
- Cuts to Specialist Teacher Allocation

President Whalen also represented NLFSC numerous times on the CBC Radio Programs – CBC Crosstalk/Radio Noon and The CBC St. John's, Central, Western, and Labrador Morning Shows. He was also a regular caller to the VOCM Radio Shows – Open Line, Back Talk and Night Line, and was interviewed numerous times by NTV and CBC Television on issues relating to education advocacy.

President Whalen made the headlines in numerous newspapers throughout NL and Canada and was invited to participate in several radio panel discussions on issues affecting youth.

Over the past year Secretary Peter Whittle has also promoted the mandate and goals of NLFSC in the media (CBC, Open Line, Back Talk and Night Line). Mental health, study habits, inclusion, guidance allocations, cuts to teacher allocations, and busing were just a few of the issues he canvassed.

In addition to his radio, television and newspaper interviews, the President wrote four editorials related

to education. His writings entitled “Forget Tolerance, Let’s Talk About Acceptance”; “Doing the Report Card Hustle”; “Investing in our Children,” and “Battling the Peer Pressure Plague: Nominations” were published in each Transcontinental newspaper across the province and online.

President Whalen orchestrated the first ever School Council Day held in the province on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Hosted during Education Week, it acknowledged the invaluable contribution made by School Council members and supporting volunteers within our school communities.

The President also praised educators and school staff for education and nurturing our students during this year’s Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week, which occurred February 9 to 15, 2014.

Throughout the year, press releases were issued regarding the Annual General Meeting; Year-end Safety, the Impact of Cuts to Education in Budget 2013, Back to School, Education Week, Concerns around Guidance and Administration Allocations, and the new Safe and Caring Schools Policy. During Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week in February, the NL Federation of School Councils and Honourable Clyde Jackman, Minister of Education, issued a joint press release thanking our Teachers and School Staff for the care and guidance they give our children.

Furthermore, on February 14<sup>th</sup>, President Whalen delivered a pre-budget submission on behalf of NLFSC membership to Honourable Charlene Johnson, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board. The consultations are designed to provide key stakeholders, individuals, and interest groups with an opportunity to identify budget priorities to be considered during the upcoming provincial budget.

The NLFSC’s newsletter, “The Cuffer,” which is usually sent out five times per year, is a benefit of membership in the Federation. A special package containing the materials relating to the Annual General Meeting was sent to all School Councils in February, followed by several reminders and an updated bulletin.

NLFSC has a toll-free telephone line for the convenience of members: 1-877-739-4830.

One of the key instruments of communication for the Federation is the membership listserv, which facilitates quicker information exchange. When Councils register as members of the Federation, they have the option of including their e-mail addresses for the listserv. The listserv is used on a weekly basis, to inform our membership of any changes relative to NLFSC or our schools. It is also a great medium to gather immediate feedback on issues of concern and to share current information.

From our various methods of feedback, the NLFSC then sets its agenda and initiates responses to media on the information sent through the listserv. The names of schools and School Council members, who respond via the listserv, are always kept in the strictest of confidence.

To strengthen communication with our membership, NLFSC has also established both Facebook and Twitter accounts.

During the year NLFSC corresponded, via e-mail, telephone, mail, and in-person meetings, with the Department of Education, the English and French School Districts as well as other government agencies and organizations on issues relating to education.

### **Excerpt from letter to Minister Jackman, written by NLFSC President Whalen, Dec. 3, 2013**

*“Today, Hon. Tom Marshall, Minister of Finance announced that the province’s deficit is now forecast to be \$113 million less than originally projected when decisions to cut teaching allocations were made. On behalf of Federation, I urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reinstate all or a portion of teaching units that were cut in Budget 2013, a cost that should not exceed more than 11% of the new projection in order to adequately support our most valuable resource – our children.”*

## REPRESENTATION

On a provincial level, NLFSC representatives regularly attend meetings, participate in discussions, and make recommendations on programs and policy. Some of the highlights of this year's meetings and discussions are included here.

### **Special Education Forum**

On May 29, 2013, NLFSC Secretary Peter Whittle participated in a public forum pertaining to Special Education Programs and Services for Children with Disabilities.

### **The Canadian Home and School Federation**

Secretary Whittle also represented NLFSC at The Canadian Home and School Federation (CHSF) Annual General Meeting in St. John's from May 30th to June 1st.

### **Department of Education**

On June 25th, NLFSC met with Department of Education officials: Minister Clyde Jackman, Deputy Minister Janet-Vivian Walsh and Sheldon Antle, Executive Assistant to Minister Jackman. This was an informal meeting to provide the opportunity for the new NLFSC Executive and Minister to meet. The discussion focused on resolutions passed at the 2013 Annual General Meeting, Budget 2013, teacher allocations, the merging of School Districts, School Council engagement and supports, and improving communication between NLFSC and the Department of Education.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association**

On May 10, 2013, NLFSC President Whalen, Secretary Peter Whittle, and Executive Director Denise Pike met with Lily B. Cole, President (now Past President) of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association, and Ed Hancock, NLTA Executive Director (now retired), to discuss common educational concerns and goals.

On December 11, 2013, NLFSC President Whalen, along with Executive Director Denise Pike, met with Jim Dinn, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and NLTA Executive Director Don Ash.

The meeting focused on common education concerns; the need for more resources to support the Inclusion Model in schools; the promotion of Teacher Staff Appreciation Week, 2014 NLFSC AGM as well as the importance of both organizations continuing to working together on behalf of students, School Councils and teachers.

Over the past year, the NLFSC Board of Directors has strengthened their relationship with the NLTA. Both organizations often share the same education concerns and advocacy goals.

### **2013 Canadian Children's Book Week**

In May 2013, President Whalen participated in The Canadian Children's Book Week by reading to a Grade One class at Hazelwood Elementary School in St. John's, NL.

### **Student Presentations**

President Whalen was also invited to speak to high school students about the importance of Career Planning, Scholarships, and Choices at Gonzaga High School and Bishops College.

## **School Council Support**

On May 14, 2013, President Whalen attended an Eastern School District Board of Trustees meeting and met with parents and School Council members from Whitbourne Elementary and Epiphany Elementary regarding plans to close their schools. (President Whalen also supported the two School Councils by attending court proceedings at the Supreme Court of NL on May 16<sup>th</sup>).

He attended a parent meeting for St. Peter's Elementary in Mount Pearl and supported the School Council in communicating their concerns to the public and officials, and also presented to the Leary's Brook Junior High School Council about the role of the Federation.

## **Meetings with Legislators and Potential Legislators**

Over the past year President Whalen and members of the Board of Directors met with provincial leaders to discuss concerns and changes within the education system.

Meetings were held with:

- Hon. Clyde Jackman, Minister of Education, MHA for Burin-Placentia West
- Official Opposition Caucus
- Dale Kirby, Education Critic for the Third Party, MHA for St. John's North
- Leadership Candidates, Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Dale Kirby, Education Critic for the Official Opposition, MHA for St. John's North

## **School Council Person of the Year Award Presentation**

On September 6, 2013, President Whalen presented the 2012-13 School Councils person of the Year Award to Lois Vokey, School Council Chairperson of St. Michael's Regional High School, Bell Island. The purpose of The School Council Person of the Year Award is to recognize significant and outstanding achievements of School Council members.

Newfoundland and Labrador English School District

On October 1, 2013, President Whalen and the Executive Director met with Darin Pike CEO/Director of Education and Tony Stack, Assistant Director of Education – Operations Division. Topics included: access to Information requests; resolutions passed at 2013 AGM, and School Council engagement (improving communication between NLFSC and NLESD; regional School Council meetings, and School Council training).

## **Teacher Induction Ceremony**

On October 25 2013, Executive Director Denise Pike attended the NLTA's Fall Ceremony of Induction into the Teaching Profession

## **Atlantic Caucus of Home & School and School Council Federations**

On November 2, 2013, President Whalen attended the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Atlantic Caucus of Home and School/School Council Federations in Charlottetown, PEI. Representatives from the Home and School Federations in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island also participated in the meeting. The group discussed common educational concerns within Atlantic Canada.

Topics included: Representation on Department and Board Committees; Government Testing and Evaluation; Bullying Prevention; Health and Mental Wellness; Transitions at all Levels of Education; and

School Safety and Technology.

Improving communication between Home and School and School Administrators, was also part of the agenda.

### **Preview of the Province's Safe and Caring School Policy**

On Nov. 4, 2013, President Whalen and Executive Director Denise Pike met with the Department of Education officials for a briefing of the newly revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy. A month later the President and the Executive Director attended in the official launch of the policy.

The new Safe and Caring Schools Policy will guide new school-based protocols and practices to combat all forms of bullying, harassment and inappropriate behavior, and is designed to provide students with the ability to recognize and avoid activities which can harm them.

### **EGALE Canada Human Rights Trust**

During December 2013, President Whalen met with Susan Rose, President of EGALÉ Canada Human Rights Trust in order to gain additional knowledge about the province's myGSA.ca resource and challenges facing the LGBTQ community in Newfoundland and Labrador

### **Department of Health and Community Services**

On February 28, 2014, the NLFSC executive met with officials from the Department of Health and Community Services, Eastern Health, and the Department of Education regarding the need for more Mental Health and Addictions supports for youth.

### **Area Associations**

On March 4, 2014, Executive Director Pike met with School Councils within Crescent Collegiate School system to discuss the roles of School Councils and to explore the possibility of establishing an Area Association.

### **Pre-Budget Submission**

This past February NLFSC submitted a pre-budget report to the Department of Finance for consideration. Some of the recommendations put forth by NLFSC include: funding for School Councils and NLFSC; increased teaching units (a needs based formula); resources for the Inclusion Model, and an increase in funding for education awareness and prevention programs on Bullying and Drug Use.

### **Student Support Services**

On February 18, 2014, President Nathan Whalen represented NLFSC on the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Services.

### **Speech from the Throne**

On March 12, 2014, the President attended the 2014 Speech from the Throne at the House of Assembly on invitation from the Office of the Premier.

### **Cyberbullying & Suicide Prevention Presentation**

On March 19, 2014, the Executive Director attended a video conference, hosted by the Canadian Red

Cross (St. John's) on Cyberbullying. The event provided the opportunity to meet Carol Todd, mother of Amanda Todd, whose tragic suicide in October 2012 brought the world's attention to the issues of cyberbullying.

### Community Partnerships

NLFSC has a long-time partnership with the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco NL (ACT), Kids Eat Smart Foundation NL and The School Milk Foundation. NLFSC often promotes the mandates of these organizations in The Cuffer.

### Tutoring For Tuition

Executive Director Denise Pike represents NLFSC on a Tutoring for Tuition Steering Committee.

### The Executive and the Board of Directors

The Executive communicated daily through e-mail and also held three face-to-face meetings and three teleconferences. Some of the topics discussed include: bullying and drug use, Teacher and Guidance Allocations, AGM Planning; Pre-Budget Submission, NFLSC funding, School Council training and funding, changes in the curriculum and numerous other concerns from individual School Councils.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils also works with other stakeholders in education and organizations that impact youth, including but not limited to:

Education	Community and Youth Serving Organizations	
Department of Education	Dept. of Health & Community Services	Dept. of Child, Youth, Family Services
NL English School District	Partners for Mental Health	Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
Conseil Scolaire Francophone TN-L	Canadian Cancer Society	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Atlantic Home & School Association	School Milk Foundation	Duke of Edinburgh Program
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Egale Canada Human Rights Trust	School Milk Foundation
PEI Home & School Federation	Autism Society of NL	Department of Justice
New Brunswick Home & School Fed.	NL Learning Disabilities Association	Members of the House of Assembly
Nova Scotia Home & School Fed.	Coalition for People with Disabilities	Partners for Mental Health
School Administrators Council	Alliance for the Control of Tobacco	Canadian Home & School Federation
NL School Boards Association	School Councils across all english and francophone schools within Newfoundland and Labrador	
NL Teachers' Association		

## TEACHER/STAFF APPRECIATION WEEK

School Councils and Home and School Associations across Canada celebrated National Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week from February 9 to 15, 2014. During the week hundreds of teachers and other school staff members such as secretaries, teacher assistants, nurses, bus drivers and custodians (across the province) were recognized for their contribution to the education system.

The popularity and celebration of Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week is growing each year. The Federation encourages parents and the wider community to thank teachers and school staff for educating and caring for our students and provides our membership with a list of ideas to incorporate into the celebration.

NLFSC received a number of e-mails and phone calls from Administrators and Teachers stating that year's TSAW was an extremely successful event in their school.

### **Quote from Press Release on Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week February 9 -15, 2014**

*"In its 25th consecutive year, Teacher Staff Appreciation Week reminds us of the important role that teachers, administrators, and support staff play in the lives of our children. Teachers and staff go above and beyond the call of duty to be role models, cheerleaders, confidants, judges, and counsellors, making a significant difference in shaping the lives of our students. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of our province's bus drivers, custodial staff, crossing guards, teachers, administrators, District and Department personnel, and support staff for their hard work, professionalism, and dedication to our youth and education in Newfoundland and Labrador."*

- NLFSC President Nathan Whalen

### A QUOTE ON LEADERSHIP

"A leader takes people where they want to go.  
A great leader takes people where they don't  
necessarily want to go, but ought to be."

—Rosalynn C

## REPORT ON THE 33<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & CONFERENCE April 26 – 28, 2014 | Greenwood Inn and Suites, Corner Brook, NL

- Friday, April 26, 2013 -

The theme: "Investing in School, Family and Community Partnerships" focused on working together as a team to address the issues of Mental Health, Bullying, Drug Use and Academic Achievement in Newfoundland and Labrador school communities.

### ***Entertainment***

The AGM began with entertainment provided by École C.C. Loughlin School Choir, Corner Brook, under the direction of Director Monica Coffin. The students delighted the audience during their singing of a number of heartfelt songs. École C.C. Loughlin School Choir gave an outstanding performance and a wonderful kickoff to our Conference.

### ***Conference Greetings and Keynote Address***

Following the entertainment, NLFSC Executive Director Denise Pike welcomed delegates and invited guests to the conference. Past President Ruby Hoskins introduced the representatives who extended greeting on behalf of their organizations.

Speakers included:

Dr. Kirk Anderson, Dean of the Faculty of Education, MUN;  
Dr. Ross Elliott, Director of Education for the Western School District  
Lily. B. Cole, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association  
Hon. Clyde Jackman, Minister of Education and MHA for Burin – Placentia West

### ***Excerpts from Minister Jackman's Keynote Address***

"Once again, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to your annual general meeting – and pleased that we were able to help you cover the cost of holding the AGM here in Corner Brook.

A lot has happened since I spoke to you last year. We have, for example, completed our public consultations on bullying – and I thank you for your involvement in that process.

We are now analyzing all the input we received from more than 30 focus group sessions held province-wide with school board and district personnel, principals, School Council chairs and parent representatives, intermediate and high school students, as well as community agencies – and, of course, from members of the public who provided input through the webpage we established specifically for that purpose.

As you know, we talked about such issues as an appropriate definition of bullying as it pertains to the education system; a proposed Bullying Prevention and Intervention Protocol; and a consistent Code of Conduct to be applied in schools. I hope to be in a position soon to announce what next steps we will be taking.

But I have to tell you, I am very encouraged by what I have heard from students and teachers at school-based anti-bullying events, and from community groups and agencies which have indicated their commitment to being part of a solution. As I have said on many occasions, it will take awareness and a commitment from all sectors of society to address this issue – and I do believe we are making progress on that front.

As you know, we announced Budget 2013 exactly one month ago, on March 26. A lot has happened since then too.

As you also know, the province is facing a substantial deficit – and that issue had to be addressed. I truly believe, however, that it is a credit to our Premier, and to our government, that reductions to K-12 education were kept at a minimum – less than three percent overall.

Given that we have increased education spending over the past nine years by 42 per cent, I think we fared very well. Again, that's an indication of the importance our Premier, and this government, places on our children, their education, and our collective future.

When we first looked at what we had to do to address the deficit, we started with the premise that student learning would not be compromised, and there would be no reductions to regular classroom teachers delivering the required curriculum. There are also no reductions to special education services or direct supports for students with special needs, despite what some have suggested. There are no changes to the K-9 class size caps this government put in place over the past several years.

We looked at ourselves first - at the department level - and took over \$6 million from our budget; everything from travel to contracted services to departmental positions. That has been, and continues to be, a very difficult process for the individuals involved, and for their colleagues. There's no getting around that.

We then had to look at the school board administrative structures we had in place to support education throughout the province. The reality is that enrolment has declined by 14,000 students, or 17%, since the last consolidation of school boards in 2004. There are 37 fewer schools – down 12%. And yet the cost of school board administration and supports at the board level is up by over 30%. Clearly we cannot continue on this path. Even if there had been no deficit to address, it would have been time to re-examine the structures we had in place to serve this reduced student population.

Bottom line is that we recognized that changes were needed if we were to continue to invest available funding where it belongs – in our schools; and in our classrooms, for the benefit of students.

When it came down to it, we realized that two school boards, one English and one Francophone, can serve our needs - provided we maintained a strong educational presence at offices in the Central, Western and Labrador regions. And we intend to do that.

Those offices will remain open, and appropriately staffed with executive, management and other staff, especially educational staff to provide necessary supports to schools, teachers and students. That will be their primary focus. Not human resources issues. Not payroll. Not accounts payable – but rather the direct delivery of educational programs and services to students and staff.

Because frankly - we had to ask ourselves if we really needed to duplicate senior executive and management staff at 4 English-language boards? And with our student enrolment declining - the answer was no.

We also asked ourselves if we needed to maintain an additional seven satellite board offices in various locations, when staff could be accommodated in area schools where capacity exists. Again, the answer was no.

But I want to be very clear on this point. While there will be some reductions in board staffing, and the satellite office buildings will close, the services provided to teachers and students will continue. The buildings will close – the services will remain.

I want to be clear on another point. While there are some reductions in professional and administrative staff at the board level, support for school-based secretarial, janitorial and maintenance hours has not been reduced.

Meanwhile, there is much that is not changing. With a \$537 million investment in teacher salaries and supports for teachers – or 64% of the entire education budget – we will still have the best pupil-teacher ratio of any province in Canada. I want to reiterate that - The best!

There will be no reduction in the allocation of regular classroom teachers assigned to deliver the required curriculum as a result of this budgetary process. There will be no reduction in direct services or supports for students with special needs.

Capped class sizes for the required curriculum in grades K-9 will continue. And even with the adjustments made to the allocation model, there will still be 265 more teachers in the education system in September, relative to the student population, than there were five years ago.

Meanwhile, our systematic approach to improving school infrastructure continues, with \$102 million in new and ongoing projects this year. More than \$620 million since 2004. To support families, the elimination of standard school fees continues - with \$50 million invested since 2006.

The provision of free textbooks to all K-12 public school students continues - with \$20 million spent on that initiative since 2007. We continue to invest in new curriculum, new technologies, music, theatre, visual arts programming, and skilled trades programming designed to meet the needs of our students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And I'd like to remind everyone in this room that many of these programs and initiatives didn't even exist prior to 2004. We initiated them.

But the fact is, we had to face some realities. We could not expect to maintain the same level, or increased levels, of personnel and board infrastructure while student enrolment continues to decline.

Our government has worked very hard to keep every available educational dollar focused on student learning, achievement and safety. And I think we've done that. I believe everybody in this room has the best interests of students at heart and that we can work together to develop priorities and implement programs and services, which will provide our children, and grandchildren, with the best possible education. Thank you."

A Meet and Greet Reception followed Minister Jackman's Keynote address.

**- Saturday, April 27, 2014 -**

### **Drug Awareness, Prevention and Education**

*Cpl. John Butler, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Western Region, NL  
Drugs and Organized Crime Awareness Services*

Cpl. John Butler of RCMP Drugs and Organized Crime Awareness Services gave a presentation on what drugs are available in Newfoundland and Labrador and the signs to look for in someone who is using drugs. Corporal Butler talked about how everyone has a right to live a life free of substance abuse and its effects, and that well-informed people will strive for a society free of this type of abuse. Corporal Butler spoke about the long-term consequences of drug use and how prescription drug addiction and misuse are a growing problem in this province. He stressed that a balanced approach to prevention includes education, law enforcement, and treatment.

### **Effective School Councils: Role and Functions**

*Anthony (Tony) Oxford, Retired Principal and Former School Board Trustee*

Mr. Tony Oxford began his presentation with music and song. Afterward, he spoke about the important role of School Council and how parent and community involvement in schools is one of the best ways to improve student achievement. He also emphasized the importance of early childhood learning and the need of establishing a National Child Care Program. Mr. Oxford encouraged delegates to continue to advocate for: more positive parental involvement in schools and communities; a stronger and more inclusive role for NLFSC provincially; and, the need for a provincial evaluation of the effectiveness of School Councils. He reminded delegates that School Councils should engage the school community, at every possible opportunity, to become involved in the educational process and be a part of policy development and decision-making. When asked about the reduction of School Districts and the impact on schools, Mr. Oxford's response was "For far too long, there have been too many people on the bridge and not enough in the engine room."

### **Mental Health and Addictions: Helping our Youth, Schools and Communities**

*Tammy Breen, Intake Coordinator & Team Lead  
Blomidon Place, Corner Brook, NL*

Ms. Breen talked about how mental health affects many aspects of our lives. It influences how we think and feel about others and ourselves. It also affects our ability to cope with change and adapt to major life events. Mental illnesses can take many forms, just as physical illnesses do. Mental illnesses are still feared and misunderstood by many people, but that fear is disappearing as people more educated about the disease. Mr. Breen talked about the warning signings of mental illness and the importance of seeking treatment as well as the various programs/tools and resources available in this province. She also stressed the need for parents, schools and the community to become more informed and involved in promoting good mental health and supporting others who are suffering from a mental illness

### **Business Meeting Summary (Official Minutes will be passed at the 2014 Annual General Meeting)**

The Chair for the Business Meeting was President Ruby Hoskins (currently Past President). Tony Oxford, recipient of the NLFSC Life Member Award served as the Parliamentarian. Business included the presentation of the Annual Report, President's Report, Financial Report, and Budget for fiscal year 2013. The following 5 resolutions were discussed and adopted:

#### **1. Mental Health and Addictions**

Whereas Mental Health and Addiction issues are on the rise;  
Whereas current levels of service cannot adequately respond to the needs of students;  
Therefore be it resolved that the Department of Education create a new allocation for Youth, Mental Health and Addiction Counsellors, at a ratio of 1:500 students.

#### **2. New School Construction**

Whereas there has been an increase in the number of newly constructed schools with a physical plant that has not fully met the educational needs of students;  
Whereas there is a need for consultation with School Councils to ensure newly constructed schools meet the needs of students and their communities;  
Therefore be it resolved that the NLFSC work with the Department of Education and all School Districts within NFLD to have School Councils directly involved in the construction, development and consultation of new school construction and redevelopment.

#### **3. Reduction to Teacher Allocations in Budget 2013**

Whereas the NLFSC membership disapproves of the Government of Newfoundland and Labradors recent announcement of a reduction in the Administration, Learning Resource teachers and Specialist Teacher Allocation;  
Whereas there is going to be significant impact to the quality of teaching, student learning and program delivery;  
Be it therefore resolved that NLFSC lobby government to ensure cuts to aforementioned educational

staffing allocations be reconsidered and reinstated.

#### **4. Cuts to RCMP Community and School Programs**

Whereas RCMP resources and programs have been cut as a result of the 2013 Provincial Budget and important educational services will be lost; and

Whereas important anti-bullying and drug awareness educational services will be lost as a result;

Be it further resolved that NLFSC campaign government to have financial resources to the RCMP reinstated

#### **5. Guidance Services (amendment to previous resolution)**

Whereas schools are facing an increase of students that are undergoing difficulties;

Whereas guidance counsellors are often responsible for dealing with a heavy load of assessments of students with Learning Difficulties and an increased number of students requiring counselling services;

Whereas the current allocation is one full-time personnel for 500 students;

Therefore Be It Resolved that NLFSC advocate for improvements in current Guidance Support Services to include time and travel for Guidance Counsellors based on geographical challenges.

#### **Election of the Board of Directors**

An election for the positions of President, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President was held with the following results:

President 2013 – 2015 | Nathan Whalen, Bishops College High School, St. John's

1st Vice President 2013 – 2014 | Terry Green, Sprucewood Academy, Grand Falls-Windsor

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President 2013 – 2015 | Paulette Grimes, Woodland Primary, Grand Falls-Windsor

The Business Meeting also included discussions on: (1) Membership Fees; (2) Increase in School Council support and services; (3) Bussing regulation and Student Transportation Review; (4) Review of Health and Curriculum/Focus on Mental Health and Addictions; (5) Funding for School Councils and NLFSC; and (6) Merging of School Districts.

**2012 School Council Person of the Year Award:** Lois Vokey, St. Michael's Regional High, Bell Island.

**Location of 2014 Annual General Meeting:** April 2014 in Grand Falls-Windsor, NL

#### **A Note of Thanks**

Thank you to the School Councils that were represented at the Annual General Meeting & Conference! We appreciate your effort in finding the resources and time to attend the conference.

NLFSC thanks the Department of Education for providing financial support through our grant and for the continuation of in-kind services throughout the year along with AGM & Conference sponsorship.

NLFSC gratefully appreciates the collaboration and support of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. As well as being open to discussions on educational issues, the NLTA provides in-kind financial support through complimentary printing of our newsletters and other resources. This contribution is greatly appreciated.

NLFSC also acknowledges the support of the Eastern School District (now NL English School District) and the staff at Roncalli Central High in Avondale for the provision of our office space free-of-charge. We sincerely appreciate this continued in-kind commitment.

Thank you to all of our other corporate sponsors and schools for making this event and year possible!

Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils  
PO Box 23140  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J9

**T** 1-877-739-4830 **E** [nlfsci@gmail.com](mailto:nlfsci@gmail.com)