

The Cuffer

A Newspaper for School Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador



June, 2013



Message from the President

Mr. Nathan Whalen

I am very honored to bring greetings from the newly elected Executive of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils. I would like to thank all the School Councils representatives who attended the AGM in Corner Brook this past April and for giving me an opportunity to represent School Councils across the province.

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.

We are currently facing serious challenges in meeting the needs of students in schools all over this province. The cuts to education, announced by Government in the March 26th provincial Budget are aggressive and will have a negative impact on students and their learning in the classrooms of this province come September.

I believe the number one factor in student achievement is the teacher; the number two factor is the administrator. Cutting teachers and administrators in schools will mean our children will not receive the same quality of education that they have received in the past.

Having the appropriate amount of human resources in schools is key to ensuring our students do not fall between the cracks, are given the ability to broaden their horizons, and are literate in a host of competencies.

In this year's budget the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador modified allocation formulas for Administrators, Learning Resource Teachers (Teacher-Librarians), and Specialist Teachers (music, physical education, etc.) along with a 40% reduction in the needs-based resource allocation formula.

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President's Message continued

This means that schools will have less resources to meet the needs of students with learning challenges and disabilities.

Less teachers and administrators mean a lower quality of education. It's that simple!

The executive of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation is lobbying government to consider the hundreds of students across the province and reverse their decision to cut teaching units.

We encourage all interested members of the public to do the same. Please take your concerns to your MHA and voice your opinions about the issues facing your child's school, and education in general, to the media.

Let's keep this conversation going. Our students deserve the best education possible. They're *our* students but the decisions we make today will have a significant impact on *their* future.

I look forward to hearing from many of you over the next year.

In the spirit of education,

Nathan Whalen
 NLFSC President
 E-mail: whalennathan@hotmail.com

Media Interviews

Although he has only been in the President's chair for a month, newly elected Nathan Whalen has been quite busy representing the goals of the NLFSC and advocating for our students.

Over the past month President Whalen has been repeatedly interviewed by the media on a number of issues affecting our schools, students and school councils such as our **April 26-28 AGM, budget cuts and the impact on education, cuts to teacher allocations, merging of school Districts, the need for more**

openness, accountability, and engagement within our education system, and the valuable role School Councils have to play within the metrics of engagement and accountability.

Representation and Meetings

On May 10, NLFSC President Whalen, Secretary Peter Whittle and Executive Director Denise Pike met with Lily B. Cole, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association and Ed Hancock, NLTA Executive Director to discuss common educational concerns and goals. The NLFSC looks forward to partnering with the NLTA on future advocacy issues.

Over the past month President Whalen also participated in The Canadian Children's Book Week by reading to a group of elementary students. He was also asked to speak to a group of high school students about the importance of Career Planning and Choices.

On May 14, President Whalen attended an Eastern School Board District Board of Trustees Meeting and met with Parents and School Council members from Whitbourne 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 16th.

Over the past few weeks President Whalen met with members of the Liberal Party and NDP Party to discuss concerns and changes within the education system.

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Representation Continued

On May 29th NLFSC Secretary Peter Whittle participated in a public forum on Special Education Programs and Services for Children with Disabilities. The event was hosted by Dale Kirby, NDP MHA for St. John's North.

NLFSC Secretary Peter Whittle represented NLFSC during The Canadian Home and School Federation (CHSF) Board of Directors Meeting in St. John's from May 30th to June 1st.



Meet the new 1st Vice-President Terry P. Green

Terry resides in Grand Falls Windsor, NL where he has lived for the past six years. Terry is the proud father of two children Adam (8) and Katie (5).

Terry is a licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and obtained these licenses in 1985 after completion of a two year correspondence course through Humber College located in Ontario.

Terry is the current owner/operator of three Funeral Home establishments in Central Newfoundland; Sunset Memorial Funeral Home, Botwood Funeral Home and Gordon Woolfrey Funeral Home. Terry served as chairperson of the Newfoundland and Labrador Funeral Director's Board for approximately 9 years. He is also actively involved in community organizations such as the Kiwanis and Sprucewood Academy school council.

Terry is a very talented musician and is often asked, by the Royal Canadian Legion throughout Central Newfoundland, to provide trumpet playing for various RCL functions. He is also often called upon by community and church groups to be a guest speaker at their meetings.

Graduations and Proms



Congratulations to all graduates across Newfoundland and Labrador from the executive and members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Schools Councils.

Education is the key to unlocking your potential. Continue to learn as a life learner, and you'll graduate life successfully.

We are so proud of you!

1st Vice-President continued on page 5

1st Vice-President continued

Terry is presently the music director of the Park St. Salvation Army Citadel, and often volunteers his time and music abilities to other church and community functions.

Terry has a variety of hobbies and enjoys golfing, hockey, music, however spending time with his children is his first and most favored priority.

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“The membership of the Federation of School Councils is aware of budgetary restraints and agrees that efficiencies must occur where possible, but the parents and students from across this province have already made their sacrifices towards the reduction of the provincial deficit over the past few decades. They supported the elimination of denominational education to decrease duplication of services and to allow better utilization of resources such as teachers, buildings, and technology. They watched, and still watch, as the doors to hundreds of community schools closed and school boards were reduced to five..and now to two.

They anticipated, and were led to believe that these necessary financial changes would lead to achieved efficiencies and allow government to improve education. However each year they continue to watch as more and more teachers are removed from our schools, and programs are reduced and eliminated. Sadly each year School Councils and parents watch helplessly as the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador erodes away.”

Nathan Whalen, NLFSC President



Meet the new 2nd Vice-President Paulette Grimes

Paulette Grimes is from Grand Falls-Windsor where she currently resides. She is a busy mom to two wonderful children, Logan and Jorja, who manage to keep her going from morning to night.

In addition to being a mother, she is also a teacher working at the intermediate school level in the central area. After graduating from Memorial University of Newfoundland, she began teaching adults at local colleges and then moved into the intermediate schools.

She has been a volunteer in different capacities and with different organizations including the YMCA, Laubach Literacy, and school councils. She is presently Chair of Woodland Primary School Council where she has been actively involved for the past four years.

As a member of the NLFSC, she hopes to reach out to other parents who need assistance, guidance, and feedback. Also, she believes the entire society of Newfoundland and Labrador has something to contribute to a child's future. Her mother always stressed, *“it takes a whole community to raise a child.”* This is Paulette's philosophy as well and something she feels everyone should have a part in carrying out.

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**NLFSC Secretary
Peter Whittle**

As another school year comes to a close the importance of the NL Federation of School Councils as an advocacy is becoming very evident.

The provincial budget was a harbinger of the failure of the government to consult with parents, teachers and administrative staff. It is also proof that government does not have a firm handle on the needs of students in and out of the classroom.

As the father of three school aged children, I am concerned about the impact that 40% of the teacher cuts coming from the “needs based” part of the allocation formula will have on the delivery of important initiatives like 21st Century Learning; Anti-bullying; Safe & caring Schools, Nutrition and anti-obesity programs; Anti- smoking and anti-drug programs; Music programs & Physical Education programs.

The needs in our classrooms are greater today than ever. That **ALL** students perform to their potential is what we expect from the public education system. The social and emotional complexities of families and our present day students are very challenging, yet the Provincial Government is expecting more from our schools while they cut, cut, cut!

The budget cuts are the clearest and most present danger facing our students, teachers and quality of education. Unfortunately, these cuts are just part of the threats facing the public education system in our “have” province stop denying the impact and listen to concerns from teachers, administrators and parents and work with **us to find solutions that do not unravel years of advancement.**

I look forward to my second year as a member of the executive and welcome our new president and new board members.

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“The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering: Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good.”

~Ivan Scheier

Did you know NLFSC has a new Facebook page and twitter account? Please join us at:

www.facebook.com/nlfederationofschoolcouncils

www.twitter.com/nlfsc

What Cuts To Education Really Mean:

In September 2013 there will be only one specialist teacher per every 150 students instead of one per every 125 students as there is now. Specialist teachers teach such subjects as Music, Fine Arts, Physical Education, Skilled Trades/Technology.

In September 2013 the number of teaching units for the 'needs-based' allocation will be reduced from 129 to 63. About 40% of the teaching units being cut by the Provincial Budget will be coming from the 'needs-based' part of the teacher allocation model. This part of the model is intended to provide additional teachers to meet needs that districts identify but which cannot be met by the 'formula-based' allocations under the teacher allocation model.

In September 2013 those schools affected will experience a 14% to 20% percent cut in their allocation for administration. This means less time for meetings with parents and less time to set up and oversee programs such as Safe and Caring Schools, breakfast programs, KinderStart, anti-bullying programs, to name a few.

In September 2013 there will be one Learning Resource Teacher (teacher librarians) per every 1,000 students instead of one per every 750 students as there is now. LRTs are those who work collaboratively with other teachers to support teaching and learning.

In September 2013 there will be a significant reduction in the number of program specialists and numeracy/literacy support teachers which means there will be less support for teachers in the implementation of curriculum in their classrooms.

Cuts to Education Must Be Reversed

“As the newly elected President of the Federation of School Councils, I am deeply affected and concerned about some of the stories being expressed to me by our membership. The loss of 160 teachers, as announced in the Provincial Budget, from schools across this province is going to greatly impact our students and classrooms and has School Councils and parents very fearful about their children’s education and future.

The actual “needs” in our classrooms today are greater than ever. A primary elementary class of 23 to 26 students comprised of children with different levels of learning abilities, physical and emotional needs as well as one or two behavioural challenges- with only one teacher to address those needs-is totally unacceptable and humanly impossible!

I believe that teachers want desperately to meet the needs of all children entrusted in their care, but I believe many, if not all teachers, feel such is impossible unless more supports are provided. It is a well-established fact that student achievement is impacted the highest at the classroom level; parents should not be left to constantly fight for resources that their children require and deserve

The expectation that *all* students perform to their potential is what parents, taxpayers and the community expect from the public education system. Creating an inclusive culture is of the utmost importance. In order to successfully achieve this, the additional human resources currently being cut in Budget 2013 must be reversed.”

Nathan Whalen, NLFSC President



Betty Gilley – Recipient of the 2013 NLFSC LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARD

As read and presented by NLFSC Executive Director, Denise Pike at the 2013 AGM

“As stated in the NLFSC Constitution:

“Life Membership in the Federation may be conferred at an Annual Meeting on any person for outstanding service in the Federation. Nominees for such membership must be endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Federation.”

To be awarded Honorary Life Membership is indeed an honor, but more than that it is recognition of the contribution to the Federation. Most of the progress and success of an organization is determined by the interest, activity and unselfish devotion of its members.

Betty Gilley is being recognized for her outstanding contribution to NLFSC.

As a long time School Council representative and a member of the NLFSC executive years Betty has:

1. Promoted the involvement of parents in NL’s public education system in a positive, effective, and long-lasting way.

2. Actively contributed to the work of NLFSC and the significant advancement of its purposes as an organization.

3. Shared her expertise on the Boards of NLFSC through participation in dialogue with executive and involvement in numerous AGMs.

Betty’s contribution to the Federation is considered to have been of significant lasting importance to the inclusion and support of parents in NL’s public education system and the improvement of education for children in the province.

The NLFSC Life membership Award recognizes exemplary commitment to the NLFSC at both the local and provincial level.

The award is intended to reflect honour upon NLFSC as well as upon the individual.

Betty Gilley has been a school volunteer for more than 10 years on a number of school councils in her town of Deer Lake. She started volunteering at school when her daughter started Kindergarten.

Betty spent five years on school council at Elwood Elementary School, Deer Lake, serving in the capacity as Vice-Chair for three of those years. She stayed on at the elementary school council even after her daughter had already moved on to junior high. Betty is now in her sixth year on school council at Xavier Junior High School. For the first two years she served in the capacity of Vice Chair and for the past four years she has been the Chair. She also served in the position of Vice-Chair, for two years, on the Elwood High School Council.

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Betty recently completed her second two year term as 2nd Vice President of the NLFSC. As the current 2nd Vice-President, Betty has had the opportunity to represent the NLFSC at a meeting with the Minister and officials of the Department of Education. She has participated in discussions on parental involvement funding, guidance allocations, teen substance abuse, fire refuge policy for schools, power drinks and budget requests.

During her time as a school council member and her position on the NLFSC Board of Directors, Betty has participated in 8 AGMs which have helped shaped the direction and policy for NLFSC. She has been directly involved in the planning of the NLFSC Annual General Meeting having hosted the AGM in Deer Lake in 2010.

Betty has been a dedicated and loyal member and supporter of the NLFSC Executive and has worked diligently to further the NLFSCs mandate for excellence in education for all children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On behalf of the NLFSC membership we are pleased to present Betty with the Federation of School Councils Life Membership Award for outstanding and dedicated service to Education and to the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils.

Congratulations and thank you for everything you have done to help move NLFSC into the future.

You will make a wonderful addition to the group of NLFSC Life Members”.

Corner Brook
April 2013

The following excerpt was included in a May 3rd Letter to the Editor

“More than ever, in today’s climate of heightened expectations, School Administrators are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts and facility managers. They are also expected to resolve and mediate the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students and district office personnel.

In addition our Administrators have to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs and are expected to find ways to address those needs. Our School Administrators are not just schedulers. They are leaders who engage across the classrooms, to provide instructional leadership and direct interventions on programs like anti-bullying and direction on special needs support.

Many of the School Councils we are hearing from are losing anywhere from a quarter to a full administrative unit often stating, “I don’t know how our school is going to manage in September.” Cuts to administrative time in schools will have a direct and detrimental impact on our students and schools.”

---Nathan Whalen, NLFSC President

**When you study great teachers...
you will learn much more from
their caring and hard work than
from their style.”**

— William Glasser

Highlights from AGM Business Meeting (April 27, 2013) in Corner Brook

The Chair for the Business Meeting was Past President Ruby Hoskins. Tony Oxford, recipient of the NLFSC Life Member Award served as the Parliamentarian.

There were 21 voting delegates in attendance, 8 non-voting delegates and 23 Proxy's to establish the quorum. Business included the presentation of the Annual Report, President's Report, Financial Report, as well as the 2013-2014 Budget. 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.

(Amended from Resolution passed at 2012 AGM)

3. Administration and Teacher Allocation

Whereas the NLFSC membership disapproves of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's 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;

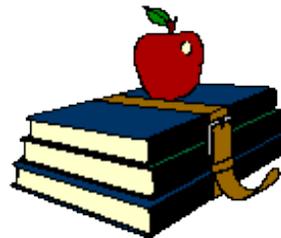
Be it therefore resolved that NLFSC lobby government to ensure cuts to aforementioned educational staffing allocations be reconsidered and reinstated.

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 therefore resolved that NLFSC campaign government to have financial resources to the RCMP reinstated



Business Meeting highlights continued on page 10

5. Guidance Services (amended from 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.

A lengthy discussion also took place on how the loss of 160 teaching units, as announced in the last provincial Budget, will affect their schools, classrooms and students. The executive was directed to make advocating for more teachers and lobbying government to move from a “numbers based” teacher allocation formula to a “needs based” one, their number one priority for the next school year.

Delegates felt schools will not be able to deliver the same level of services they have in the past and the educational needs of our student will not met.

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 Council and NLFSC and (6) Merging of School Districts.**

Election

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

President for the term of 2013-15:
Nathan Whalen (Bishops College School, St. John’s)

1st Vice President for the term of 2013-2014:
Terry Green (Sprucewood Academy, Grand Falls-Windsor)

2nd Vice-President for the term of 2013-2015:
Paulette Grimes (Woodland Primary, Grand Falls- Windsor)

Secretary for the term of 2013-2014:
Peter Whittle (Virginia Park School and St Paul’s Jr. High, St. John’s)

Other executive members include: Ruby Hoskins, Past President, Marystown); and Michele Peach, Treasurer

The NLFSC 2013 School Council Person of the Year Award went to Lois Vokey of St. Michael’s Regional High, Bell Island. The award will be officially presented to Ms. Vokey at her school sometime in the near future. Ms. Vokey was nominated for The School Council of the Year Award by Gary Petten, Principal and Tonya Kearley, Vice-Principal of St. Michael’s Regional High.

The location and date of the 2014 AGM was deferred to the executive.

Excerpts from Minister Jackman's Keynote Speech during the 2013 NLFSC AGM

"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.

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.

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 21st 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.

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."

National Aboriginal Day

June 21, 2013

Canada's National Aboriginal Day is held annually on June 21 to celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding achievements of the nation's Aboriginal peoples. There are three Aboriginal groups in Canada – the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Canada's National Aboriginal Day gives many people the chance to learn more about Aboriginal people and their contributions towards the country's development and progress. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have the opportunity to showcase their cultures and achievements throughout Canada on this day.

Safe Kids Week 2013: Heads Up! Be Alert. Be Safe. Be Aware of Concussions.

Safe Kids Week will take place May 27 to June 2, 2013

The theme of this year's Safe Kids Week is Heads Up! Be Alert. Be Safe. Be Aware of Concussions, focusing on concussion prevention and awareness.

Brain injuries that occur in sports, such as concussions, are increasingly gaining attention as a concern for children, parents, and sports communities across Canada. The goal of this year's Safe Kids Week is to raise awareness and provide actionable education messages to parents and caregivers through building the capacity of public health and community professionals around concussions.

For more information, visit the website at www.safekidscanada.ca

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!
We look forward to hearing from you in the fall



The Cuffer is a benefit of membership in the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils. Annual membership dues are based on school enrolment. Individual subscriptions are available at \$15 per year.

The views expressed or implied in this publication are not necessarily official positions of the Federation.

The mention of any program, organization, resource, product, person, place, or school does not constitute an endorsement by NLFSC.

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