

# news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

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## **Deep cuts to Options and Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>) Program detrimental to students**

The NSTU has received word that funding and staffing for the Options and Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>) program has been cut at some high schools next year.

O<sub>2</sub> is a co-op program that provides young people with guidance and on-the-job experience to help them positively transition into the workforce. According to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's website, the program "focuses on helping students achieve their academic potential, gives direction and support in developing goals and potential career pathways, and encourages students to commit to a new approach to their learning."

"These changes will dramatically alter program delivery, and as a result, negatively impact students," says NSTU President Paul Wozney. "Over the years O<sub>2</sub> has helped a lot of young Nova Scotians discover a career and/or trade and develop the required skills to set them on a better path in life. These cuts mean less support for O<sub>2</sub> students, making it harder for some to meet entrance requirements for dedicated NSCC courses they are counting on."

He adds, "I'm calling on the government to release a full list of schools that have had their O<sub>2</sub> funding cut next year. Parents deserve to know the truth and they deserve an explanation."

This is the second time in a week the NSTU has called on the government to disclose budget cuts. On Monday it was discovered that Early Literacy Support (ELS) positions have been eliminated or reduced at many schools, a claim government initially denied. A subsequent document released by the HRCE showed that 20 ELS positions are being cut in the Halifax region alone.

"Without school boards, Nova Scotia now has the least transparent education system in Canada. It's entirely unfair that major decisions are being made that impact students, while parents and communities are being kept in the dark. This is no way to manage your public school system," says Wozney.

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