

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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Atlantic Provinces' teachers concerned about Nova Scotia's cuts to public education

Members of the Council of Atlantic Provinces' Teaching Organizations (CAPTO), of which NSTU president Alexis Allen is a member, are concerned about Nova Scotia's school board funding target announcement yesterday.

"The Minister has said that the two per cent cut—which is really somewhere between four and five per cent when you factor in the cost of living increases and inflationary pressures—is designed to put children and learning first. I don't see how it won't affect children in the classroom," says NSTU president Alexis Allen.

Allen and her CAPTO colleagues, who have been meeting in Halifax for the last two days, are closely watching what impact Nova Scotia's funding cuts may have on their teachers and students. "New Brunswick is already looking at cuts, and my colleagues are apprehensive about how this will affect their provinces' funding decisions."

The cuts to public education funding include a reduction of upwards of 350 teachers through attrition this year, with no replacements. "This will definitely affect children in the classroom. The Boards already take into account a reduction of teachers for declining enrolments, and that number is nowhere near 350. It will mean larger class sizes and more combined classrooms."

Allen points out that while provincial supports for students with special needs will be maintained, these costs will no doubt increase with inflationary pressures. "In a truly inclusive system, the process of identifying students who require additional support unveils further and deeper needs. Currently 21 per cent of Nova Scotia students are provided with supports for their special needs."

Programs like O2 and IB are protected in next year's budget but the Reading Recovery program is being replaced. "We continue to hear positive things from parents and teachers about the success of this program. We don't have a clear direction of what will replace it and how we will adequately support struggling readers."

Allen is also concerned about the loss of coordinators, administrators and mentors from the system over the next few years. "These positions not only provide support for the many initiatives and programs offered in the system, but they also support teachers, which ultimately has an effect on the students in the classroom."

The Council of Atlantic Provinces' Teacher Organizations is composed of representatives of the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick, New Brunswick Teachers' Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Nunavut Teachers' Association and Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation. CAPTO regularly holds joint meetings to formulate policy and discuss issues facing public education.