

NSTU Professional Association
October Conference Venue Survey Report

Prepared by:

Nova Scotia Teachers Union

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Background

There has been on-going discussion about the various venues used by NSTU Professional Associations for the annual October Conference. Some members and some associations have expressed the belief that a combination of logistics (meeting space and size, hotel accommodation, parking, etc.), tradition and member preference has effectively mandated the conference venue to be in the Metro Halifax area. Other members and associations have held that providing their conference at alternate locations around the province has provided greater flexibility and accessibility for teachers. Most of this opinion has rested on an anecdotal base and therefore could not be used to provide meaningful guidance to NSTU Professional Associations.

At its meeting of January 20-22, 2005, the Provincial Executive passed the following motion:

That the NSTU conduct a survey of the membership with respect to location of conferences, the rotation of association conferences on a province-wide basis and the use of satellite conference sites for large associations.

A draft survey, key actions and timetable were developed and presented to the Professional Associations Coordination Committee at its meeting on November 4, 2005 for input, revision and approval. The survey was finalized and approval given for its distribution to teachers prior to December 2005.

Methodology

A survey instrument was developed (see Appendix B) to determine teachers' views concerning the venue for the annual October Professional Association conferences. Specifically, this instrument sought to determine whether teachers supported distributing the conferences around the province, the preferred venues and if there was support for the concept of rotating venues.

A random sample of one thousand members was selected from the NSTU membership database. The sample included members working in the Nova Scotia Community College system. The survey was sent to the selected teachers at each teacher's educational site along with a covering memo from the Professional Associations Coordination Committee (see Appendix C) explaining the rationale for the survey and its importance to members.

Results

A total of 370 completed surveys were returned and formed the basis for the analysis.

Local	Number of Responses	Local	Number of Responses
Annapolis	21	Inverness	14
Antigonish	17	Kings	28
Cape Breton	65	Lunenburg	23
Colchester-East		Northside-	
Hants	40	Victoria	19
CSANE	6	NSCC	12
Cumberland	17	Pictou	27
Dartmouth	1	Queens	8
Digby	8	Richmond	4
Guysborough	2	Shelburne	10
Halifax City	7	Yarmouth	15
Halifax County	14	(blank)	6
Hants West	6	Total	370

While the number of surveys returned is an excellent return rate, there is an anomaly in the number of returns from the Metro area in contrast to the return rate from the rest of the province. A total of only twenty-two surveys were returned from the Halifax County, Halifax City and Dartmouth Locals. There were 65 surveys returned from teachers in Cape Breton Local and 40 were returned from teachers in Colchester-East Hants Local. Six surveys were returned that did not provide information about the respondent's Local. While the low return rate from the Metro area is of concern, we can still be confident the survey reflects the broad views of all teachers.

In the data sample, there were 127 respondents who indicated they did not attend the 2005 October Conference and 233 who indicated they did attend¹.

Looking at the aggregate results (see Table 1, page 6), it is clear that a strong majority, almost two out of every three members, would like to see their conference location rotate. While there is some minor difference in the proportions if the responses from those who attended the 2005 October Conference are separated from those who did not, the pattern remains the same. The same proportion (roughly two out of three members) believe that it is important that their Professional Association conference is occasionally located outside the Halifax metro region. There was less agreement that the conference *usually* is located outside the metro region although one in five members thought that it should be. However, one in five members also thought that it was very important that their conference is normally held in the metro region.

Members are willing to attend conferences located around the province. (see Table 2 on page 7) However, not all members are willing to attend conferences in every area. 64% are willing to attend conferences in the Halifax metro area. This is the largest proportion of the membership indicating willingness to attend for any area. The next most supported locations are Truro

¹ Although 370 responses were received, ten respondents did not indicate whether they did or did not attend the 2005 October Conference, yielding the total of 360 above (127 + 233).

(44.3%), Pictou (37%), Wolfville (34.1%) and Antigonish (32.4%). The locations where members were least willing to attend their October conference were in Annapolis Royal, the Strait region (other than Antigonish), rural Cape Breton (Port Hawesbury area), Shelburne and Yarmouth.

When members were asked where they would like to attend their Professional Association conference (see Table 3 on page 7) again almost two of every three respondents indicated they would like their conference in the Halifax metro area. Truro, Wolfville, Pictou, industrial Cape Breton and Antigonish were the next most preferred choices. Amherst, Annapolis Royal, Rural Cape Breton (Port Hawesbury area), Yarmouth and Shelburne were the least preferred locations where members would like to attend their conference.

Regional differences with regard to the importance of moving the October Conference location are worth noting, but do not alter the general picture that emerges from the aggregate data. Teachers in CSANE, Cumberland, Kings, Pictou and Richmond Locals provided the strongest indication that basing their conference in the metro area was not important. Looking at this from the opposite perspective, members from Cape Breton, Inverness, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia Community College, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Dartmouth,² Halifax City and Halifax County Locals indicated the strongest support for having the conference normally in the metro area. (see Figure 3 on page 8)³

The strongest support for occasionally holding the October Conference outside metro came from respondents in CSANE, Cumberland, Digby and Hants West Locals. (Figure 4, page 9) Support was weakest from respondents from Annapolis, Halifax City, Northside-Victoria and Queens Locals.⁴

CSANE, Cumberland and Shelburne Locals gave the most support to the idea that the October Conference should usually be held outside the metro area (see Figure 5, page 10). Over half the responses from Annapolis, Halifax City, Kings, Northside-Victoria and Queens Locals thought this was not important.⁵

Finally, over half the respondents in Annapolis, Antigonish, Cape Breton, Colchester-East Hants, CSANE, Cumberland, Digby, Guysborough, Halifax County, Hants West, Inverness, Kings, Lunenburg, Northside-Victoria, Nova Scotia Community College, Pictou, Queens, Richmond and Yarmouth Locals supported the concept of rotating locations for the October Conference (see Figure 6, page 11 and Figure 7 on page 12). This is 19 of 22 Locals.

While the differences between the responses from those who attended the 2005 October Conference compared to those who did not are not large, there are some useful observations that

² Note that the Dartmouth opinion is 100%, but there was only one survey returned identified from the Dartmouth Local.

³ The indicator for this perspective is the proportion of “Not Important” responses to the question “How important is it to you that the NSTU Professional Association conference you would normally attend be located in the Halifax region?” Locals with 30% or fewer responses that said staying in Halifax was not important were read as saying that 70% of the responses believed that staying in Halifax was at least *somewhat* important.

⁴ Again, Dartmouth is not included here because there was only one survey and it is not possible to draw any conclusion of preference.

⁵ Same comment as above.

can be made. Members who did not attend responded 8.3% more that they felt the conference should be rotated around the province. (67.6% and 59.3% respectively)

This pattern is repeated in the support of the statements expressing the view that the conference should occasionally or should usually be outside metro.

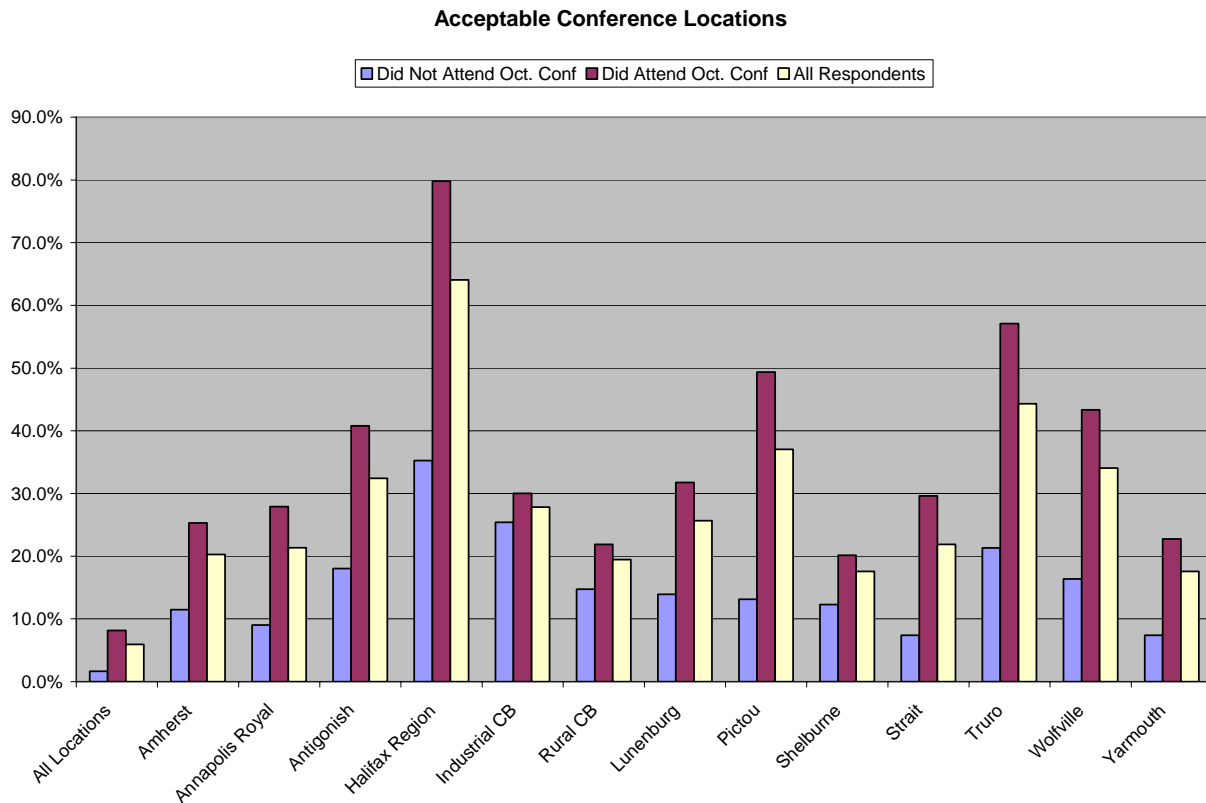
71.0% of the respondents who did not attend the 2005 October Conference believe it is either somewhat important or very important that the conference occasionally move from the Halifax area. This compares with 65.6% of the respondents who did attend the 2005 conference registering one of these two positions.

Similarly, 63.1% of those who did not attend the October Conference supported (somewhat or very) the statement that the conference should usually be away from metro in contrast to 58.1% of the respondents who did attend the October Conference this past year.

39 respondents (30.7%) who did not attend the October Conference in 2005 indicated that location was a factor in their decision not to attend.

There are some differences between these two groups with respect to acceptable and preferred locations as can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2⁶.

Figure 1 Locations Members are Willing to Attend

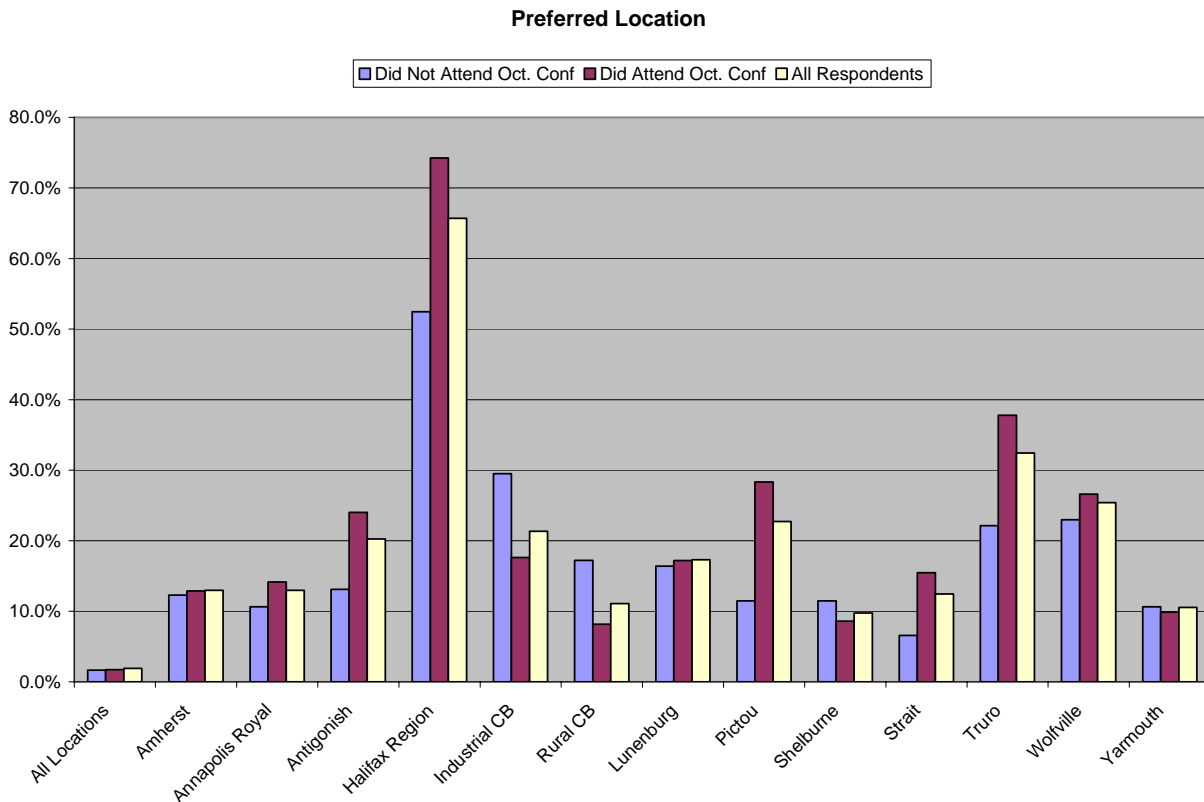


⁶ The percentage is the number of respondents indicating the location divided by the total number of respondents who did not attend the 2005 October Conference, those who did and the combined figure respectively.

Teachers who attended the 2005 October Conference were significantly more willing to attend future conferences in any location. Antigonish, Pictou and Truro stand out as acceptable venues among those who attended the 2005 conference.

There is a closer correspondence between those who did and did not attend the 2005 conference when the question is where they would like the conference to be held.

Figure 2 - Location of Choice



In all cases, only a very small proportion of respondents indicated they would attend the conference regardless of the conference location or had no preference for its location. It is interesting to note that industrial Cape Breton was preferred over all sites except Halifax by those who did not attend the 2005 conference.

Conclusions

While there is very clear evidence that NSTU members would like to see the October Conference rotated around the province, there is less consistency concerning venues of choice. The only area that a majority of members endorse is the Halifax metro area. The Truro area is definitely the second choice with Wolfville, Pictou, Industrial Cape Breton and Antigonish forming a group in third place. If “locations of choice” is combined with acceptable locations, the Lunenburg area can be added to the latter group.

The data also suggest that moving the October Conference to alternate areas may encourage teachers who did not attend the October Conference in 2005 to attend conferences in the future.

Appendix A

Tables and Charts

Table 1 Aggregate Results

	Did Not Attend Oct. Conference			Did Attend Oct. Conference			All Respondents		
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
It is Important the Conference is Normally in Metro	51.6%	36.9%	11.5%	39.1%	36.5%	24.3%	44.3%	36.3%	19.4%
It is Important the Conference is Occasionally not in Metro	28.9%	44.6%	26.4%	34.3%	43.0%	22.6%	32.2%	43.9%	23.6%
It is Important the Conference is Usually not in Metro	36.9%	39.3%	23.8%	42.0%	40.2%	17.9%	39.5%	39.8%	20.6%

	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	I Would Like the Conference Location to Rotate	67.2%	32.8%	59.3%	40.7%	63.1%

Table 2 Conference Locations Members Are Willing To Support

	Did Not Attend Oct. Conf	Did Attend Oct. Conf	All Respondents
Will Attend All	1.6%	8.2%	5.9%
Willing to Attend Conference in Amherst	11.5%	25.3%	20.3%
Willing to Attend Conference in Annapolis Royal	9.0%	27.9%	21.4%
Willing to Attend Conference in Antigonish	18.0%	40.8%	32.4%
Willing to Attend Conference in Halifax Region	35.2%	79.8%	64.1%
Willing to Attend Conference in Industrial CB	25.4%	30.0%	27.8%
Willing to Attend Conference in Rural CB	14.8%	21.9%	19.5%
Willing to Attend Conference in Lunenburg	13.9%	31.8%	25.7%
Willing to Attend Conference in Pictou	13.1%	49.4%	37.0%
Willing to Attend Conference in Shelburne	12.3%	20.2%	17.6%
Willing to Attend Conference in Strait	7.4%	29.6%	21.9%
Willing to Attend Conference in Truro	21.3%	57.1%	44.3%
Willing to Attend Conference in Wolfville	16.4%	43.3%	34.1%
Willing to Attend Conference in Yarmouth	7.4%	22.7%	17.6%

Table 3 Conference Locations That Members Would Like To See

	Did Not Attend Oct. Conf	Did Attend Oct. Conf	All Respondents
Would Like the Conference in All	1.6%	1.7%	1.9%
Would Like the Conference in Amherst	12.3%	12.9%	13.0%
Would Like the Conference in Annapolis Royal	10.7%	14.2%	13.0%
Would Like the Conference in Antigonish	13.1%	24.0%	20.3%
Would Like the Conference in Halifax Region	52.5%	74.2%	65.7%
Would Like the Conference in Industrial CB	29.5%	17.6%	21.4%
Would Like the Conference in Rural CB	17.2%	8.2%	11.1%
Would Like the Conference in Lunenburg	16.4%	17.2%	17.3%
Would Like the Conference in Pictou	11.5%	28.3%	22.7%
Would Like the Conference in Shelburne	11.5%	8.6%	9.7%
Would Like the Conference in Strait	6.6%	15.5%	12.4%
Would Like the Conference in Truro	22.1%	37.8%	32.4%
Would Like the Conference in Wolfville	23.0%	26.6%	25.4%
Would Like the Conference in Yarmouth	10.7%	9.9%	10.5%

Figure 3 - Importance of having the conference normally in the Halifax metro area

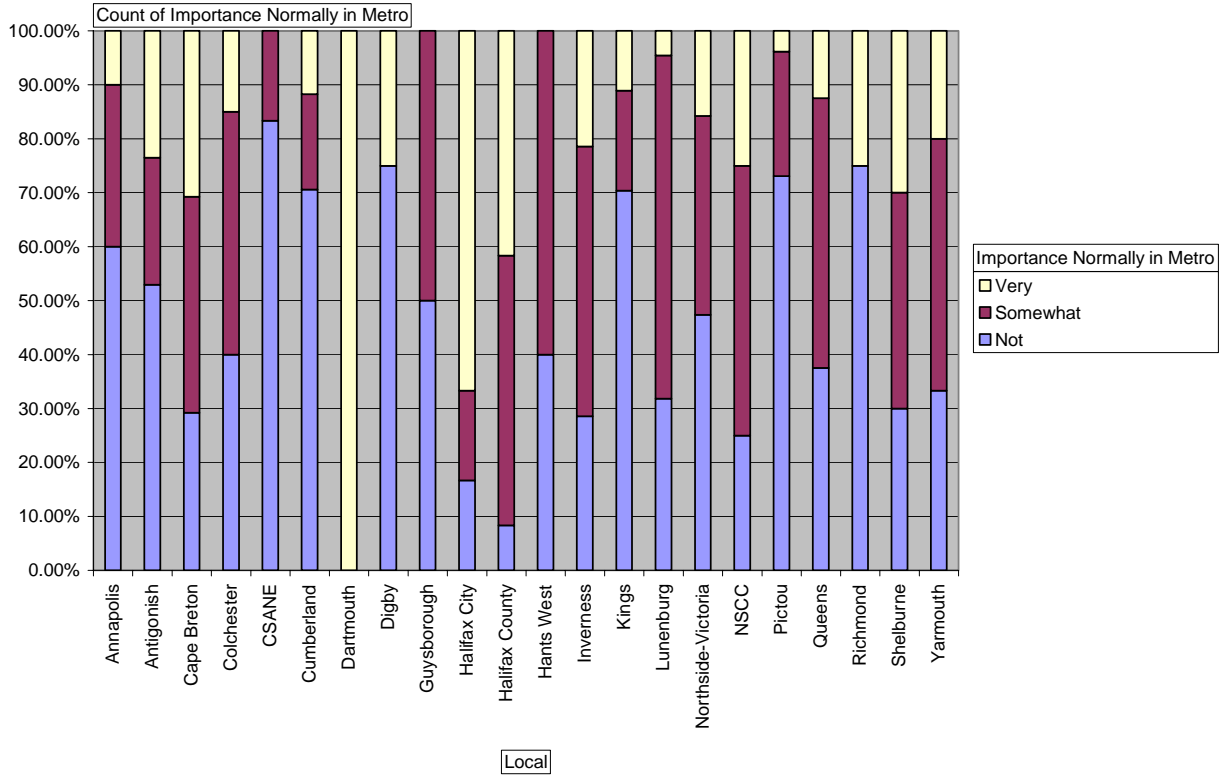


Figure 4 - Importance of Locating the Conference outside metro occasionally

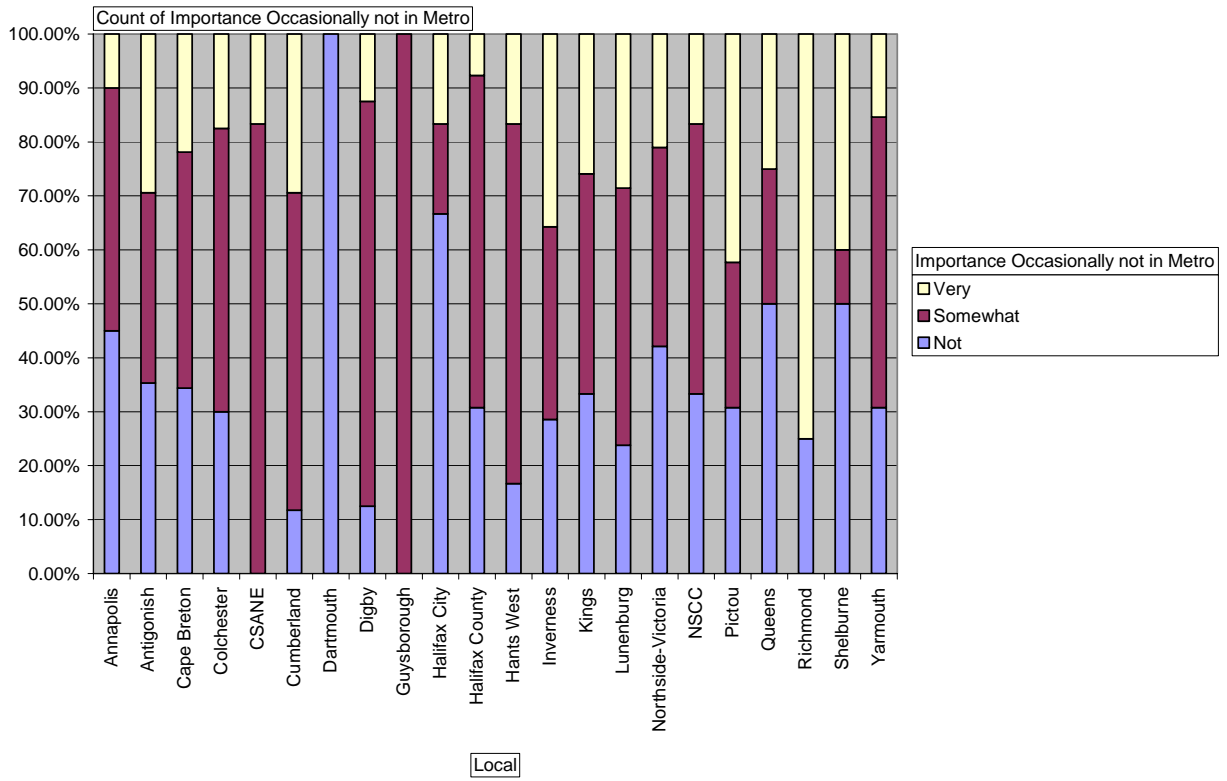


Figure 5 - The Importance of usually holding the conference outside the metro area

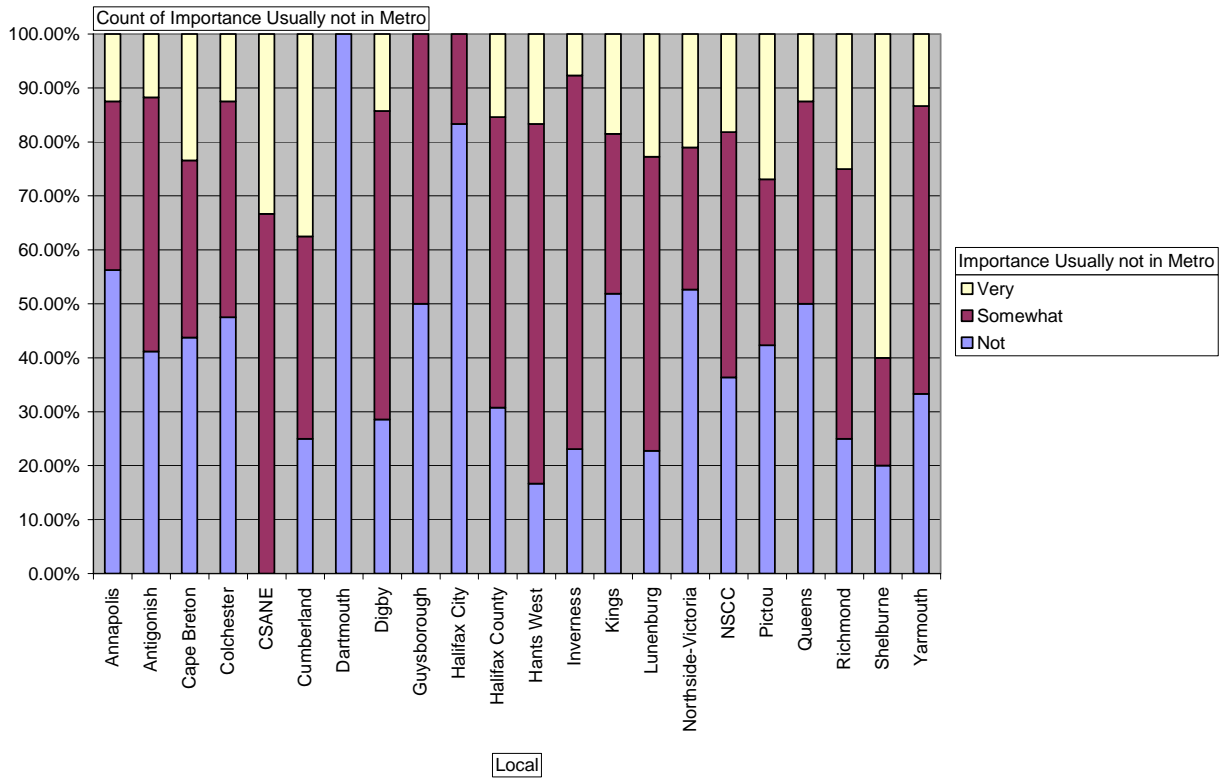


Figure 6 - Number who would like to see the conference location rotate

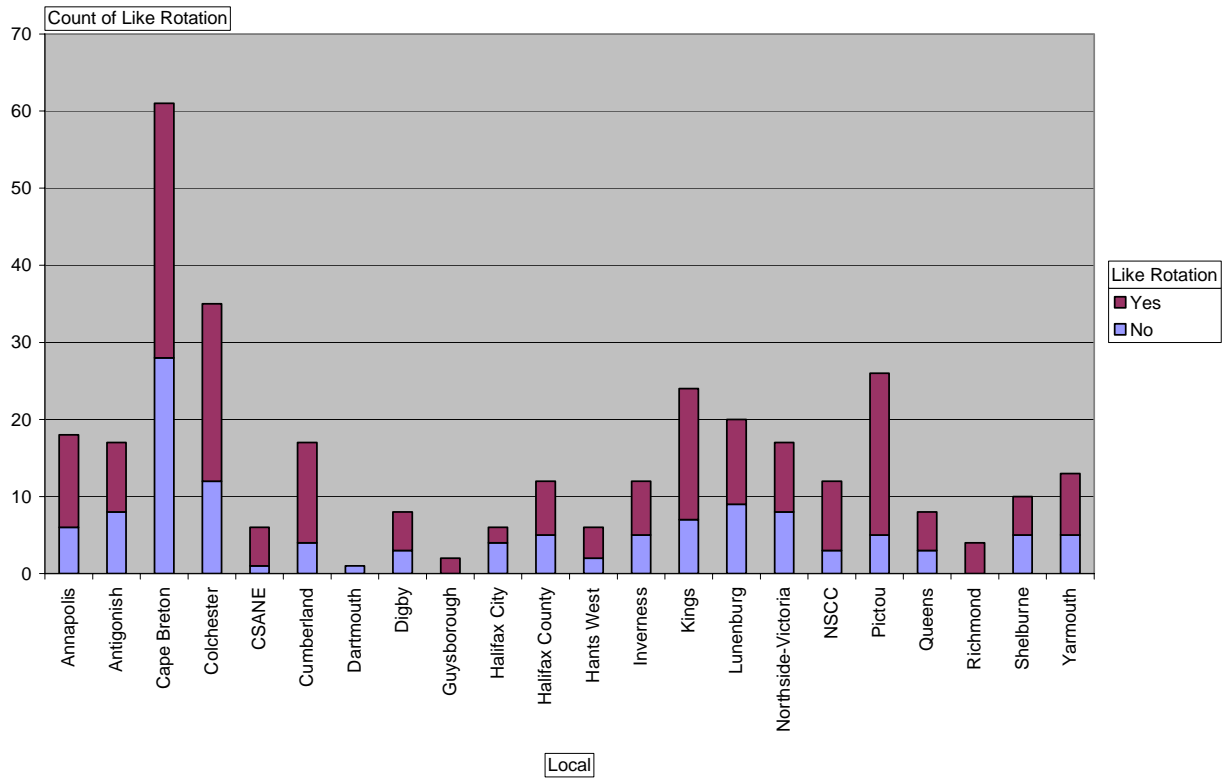
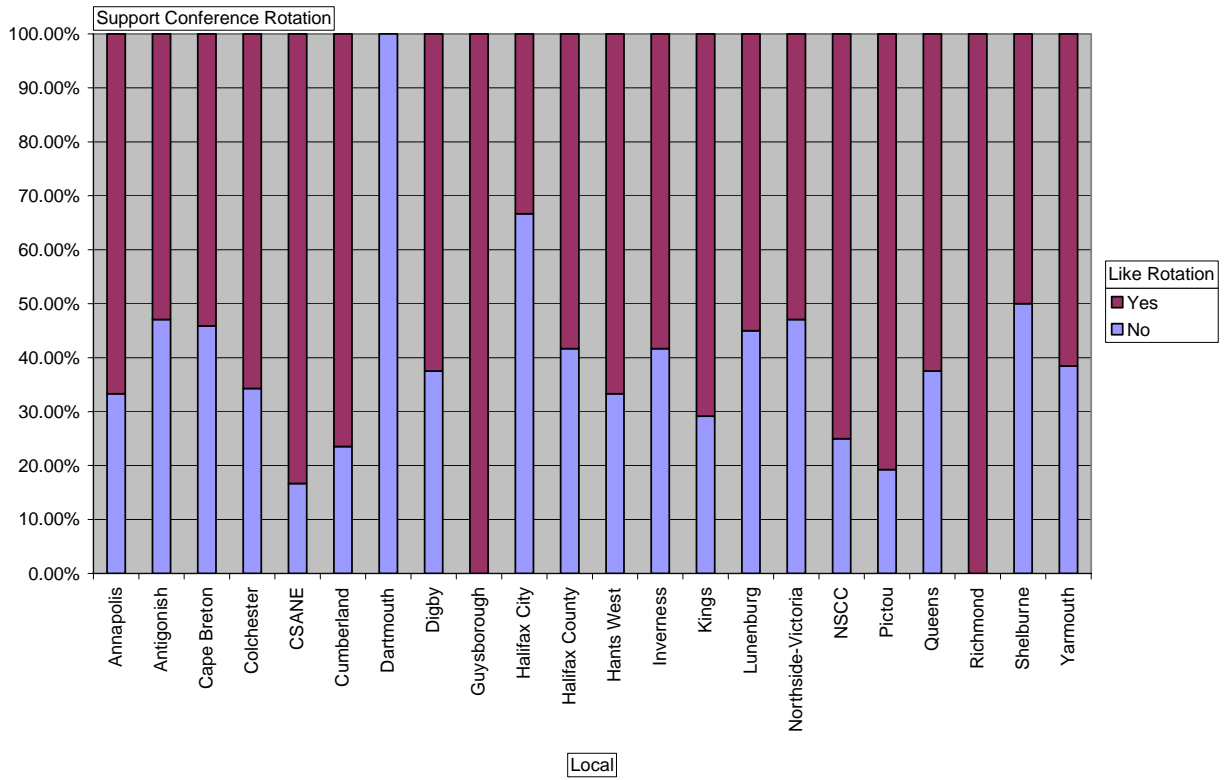


Figure 7 - Support for Rotating the Conference Location (percentage view)



Appendix B

NSTU Professional Association Conference Venue Survey

In order for the NSTU Professional Associations to provide the conference experience most beneficial to the membership, please complete all questions and return it to NSTU central office in the addressed, postage-paid envelope provided by November 25th. Thank you.

Demographic Section:

Please indicate the main grade level you teach: (check one)

- a) Elementary
- b) Middle Level/Junior High
- c) High School
- d) School-based Administration
- e) Board Office-based Administration

In what NSTU Local do you work? (check one)

- a) Annapolis Local
- b) Antigonish Local
- c) Cape Breton Local
- d) Colchester-East Hants Local
- e) Community College Local
- f) CSANE
- g) Cumberland Local
- h) Dartmouth Local
- i) Digby Local
- j) Guysborough Local
- k) Halifax City Local
- l) Halifax County Local
- m) Hants West Local
- n) Inverness Local
- o) Kings Local
- p) Lunenburg County Local
- q) Northside-Victoria Local
- r) Pictou Local
- s) Queens Local
- t) Richmond Local
- u) Shelburne Local
- v) Yarmouth Local

For how many years have you been teaching? (check one)

- a) Less than five (5) years
- b) Between Five (5) and Nine (9) years (inclusive)
- c) Between Ten (10) and Twenty (19) years (inclusive)
- d) Between Twenty (20) and Twenty-nine (29) years (inclusive)
- e) Thirty (30) years or more

NSTU Professional Association Conference Venue Questions

1. Did you attend an NSTU Professional Association (formerly called Special Association) October 2005 conference?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If “No”:

If you did not attend an NSTU Professional Association conference this year, was the conference location a significant factor in your decision not to attend?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If “Yes”:

Would you be willing to attend an NSTU Professional Association conference (check all that apply)

- a) In the Halifax Metro area
 - b) In Industrial Cape Breton
 - c) In rural Cape Breton
 - d) In the Wolfville/Kentville area (Eastern Valley)
 - e) In the Annapolis Royal/Digby area (Western Valley)
 - f) In the Yarmouth area
 - g) In the Shelburne/Liverpool area
 - h) In the Lunenburg/Bridgewater area
 - i) In the Pictou/New Glasgow area
 - j) In the Strait area
 - k) In the Truro area
 - l) In the Amherst area
 - m) In the Antigonish area
2. Would you **like** to see the NSTU Professional Association conference that you would normally attend: (check all that apply)
- a) In the Halifax Metro area
 - b) In Industrial Cape Breton
 - c) In rural Cape Breton
 - d) In the Wolfville/Kentville area (Eastern Valley)
 - e) In the Annapolis Royal/Digby area (Western Valley)

- f) In the Yarmouth area
 - g) In the Shelburne/Liverpool area
 - h) In the Lunenburg/Bridgewater area
 - i) In the Pictou/New Glasgow area
 - j) In the Strait area
 - k) In the Truro area
 - l) In the Amherst area
 - m) In the Antigonish area
3. How important is it to you that the NSTU Professional Association conference you would normally attend be located in the Halifax region? (check one)
 - a) Not important at all
 - b) Somewhat important
 - c) Very important
 4. How important is it to you that the NSTU Professional Association conference you would normally attend be located in areas of the province other than Halifax **occasionally**?
 - a) Not important at all
 - b) Somewhat important
 - c) Very important
 5. How important is it to you that the NSTU Professional Association conference you would normally attend **usually** be located in areas of the province other than Halifax?
 - a) Not important at all
 - b) Somewhat important
 - c) Very important
 6. Would you like to see the location for the NSTU Professional Association conference you would normally attend rotate to different locations in the province?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 7. Are there any other considerations you believe NSTU Professional Associations should examine concerning the location of the annual October conferences? (Please use the back of this survey if necessary.)

Appendix C

November 15, 2005

Dear NSTU Member:

Re: NSTU Professional Associations Conference Site Survey

The NSTU Provincial Executive approved a motion that directs the organization to conduct a survey of its members for the purpose of determining October conference day sites as well as the need for a cyclical rotation of sites among Professional Associations.

Your name has been randomly selected to participate in this process. It is expected that this survey can be completed in a few minutes. Enclosed is a postage-paid envelope which can be used to return the completed questionnaire.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. However, I urge you to assist us with this data collection activity as the results will better assist the NSTU in providing professional development for its members.

Results of the survey will be featured in an upcoming issue of *The Teacher*.

On behalf of your colleagues, thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in Education,

Nancy Chislett

Chair, Professional Association Coordination Committee