

# NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

## **Nova Scotia Report to the Atlantic Conference, January 29-31, 2009**

### School Board Elections

School board elections were held October 18, 2008. The past two years have been challenging for school boards, in that the Halifax board was disbanded in December of 2006 and the Strait board in May of 2008. The elections provided an opportunity for these two boards to be re-constituted as regular boards. It was also a welcome opportunity for boards throughout the province to highlight the valuable work they do. The NSSBA chaired a joint partner committee to develop strategies to promote the elections. The goals of the committee were twofold – to encourage people to run for school board office and to encourage people to vote. The committee members included school boards, administrators, teachers, parents and Department of Education representatives. The group developed a number of tools, including an ad campaign, posters for polling stations and a school board elections kit, among others. This was a positive partnering experience which reduced duplication of effort and improved communication between the partners and the public.

### School Board Governance Legislation

As a result of the situations at both the Halifax and Strait board, the Minister of Education felt there should be changes in legislation to provide all boards with the tools and authority required to deal with any future scenarios. New legislation – Bill 215 – passed third reading in November. It has not yet been officially proclaimed. The bill contains clauses relative to oath of office and code of ethics, vacancies on a school board, provisions for authorizing a school board to censure a member, changes to terms of office for the chair and vice chair, and clarifies that the Minister may appoint more than one person to replace a school board.

### HRSB/NSSBA Membership

The Halifax board ceased to be a member of the NSSBA in 2007, when Howard Windsor was serving as the “one person” board, as appointed by the Minister of Education. This has been most unfortunate in that the board representing the largest number of students no longer has a voice provincially. It has also been a challenge for the NSSBA as the association is operating with a substantially reduced budget. Halifax’s membership is of the utmost importance in shaping education for our province and the NSSBA is continuing its efforts with the new board to urge them to rejoin the association.

## Top Five Resolutions

Each year at the annual general meeting the membership passes a resolutions package which is discussed with the Minister of Education. Our top five resolutions are:

1. Under-funding in public education
2. Increased inter-agency, inter-departmental collaboration
3. Sufficient service in areas of speech-language pathology and psychology
4. Formal literacy intervention models
5. Student Information System (SIS)

## Public Education – Our Best Investment

The major education partners have been working collaboratively since early December on the issue of education funding. This initiative arose over the concern that public education may again be short-changed this year as a result of the world economic crisis. The partners, including school boards, administrators, teachers and parents, developed a lobby campaign *Invest in Education*. The campaign has utilized print and radio ads, a website, Facebook and meetings with MLAs. A rare joint news conference was January 15 to deliver the message that public education needs an increase of at least 4.5 per cent to avoid drastic cuts. The presidents of the four groups also met with editorial boards of two of our major papers. Media coverage has been good as a result of these actions. The partners continue to meet with politicians, other partners and their own members.

## Lead & Achieve Education Action Plan

NSSBA continues its work on Lead & Achieve. A briefing document has been updated for use with politicians, partners and members. As well, the committee provided valuable input on ramifications to the system if funding is not increased in this year's budget. This information was instrumental in developing the key messages for the *Invest in Education* campaign.

## Professional Development/Partnerships

The NSSBA has continued to collaborate with the Department of Education, the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and other partners, to deliver training and informational sessions on a variety of issues affecting students. Below is a list of sessions offered since we met last February.

- The NSSBA was pleased to host the Atlantic Conference January 31-February 1 with a focus on the skilled trades.
- A forum on school board leadership and student achievement, featuring Mary Delagardelle of the Iowa School Boards Association, was held in May.

- In June, our annual general meeting explored partnerships for effective education, and was hosted by the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. Ron Marks was elected president at the annual general meeting.
- The Orientation Seminar for new and returning board members was held in November.

### CSBA Congress 2009

The NSSBA is pleased to host the CSBA Congress 2009 from July 9-11 at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax. The theme of the conference is *2020: Vision for the Future*. It is anticipated that the online registration and program information will be available on our website the first of February.

### Cost-Savings Initiatives

The NSSBA is involved with three major initiatives which provide services to boards and board staff, while saving dollars for the classroom. These are the Members Employee Benefits Committee, which provides health benefits for non-teaching staff; the Pension Trustees, which oversees the pension plan for non-teaching staff; and the bulk purchasing program, which this year focused on photocopy paper, petrol and instructional supplies.

### NSSBA Awards Program

The association has a program for recognizing board members. The program consists of three components –

- Long service awards starting at 10 years and increasing in five year intervals
- School Board Member of the Year Award
- Education Week Partner Award

### Other

- The Honourable Judy Streach is the new Minister of Education, replacing the Honourable Karen Casey, who is now Minister of Health
- The association has a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Minister/Department of Education and the NSSBA.
- The NSSBA is represented at the provincial teacher negotiations.