



**Nova Scotia
School Boards Association
Association des conseils
scolaires de la Nouvelle-Écosse**

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Report to the Atlantic School Boards Association

We are pleased to provide an overview of the major issues/activities facing the NSSBA today.

1. Provincial priority of *Back to Balance*:

The province has reduced funding to public education this year by 4% (36,000,000.00) and advises to expect more cuts for the next two fiscal years. The process to reach the decision for the current fiscal year was lengthy, fractious and certainly did not meet a reasonable test of collaboration. As a result, the relations between the department of education and school boards has been tense.

2. Visioning for the 21st Century:

The NSSBA took the lead in establishing a visioning committee of key stakeholders in public education. We also asked the DOE to join as our partner in the program. The province agreed to participate and our Past President Ron Marks and Deputy Minister Rosalind Penfound were appointed as co-chairs. Some preliminary research was done and we began to develop a consensus on the model to access public input.

The process has been on hold for the past six months as the DOE wants the group to await the release of the response to the Levin Report which was commissioned by the province.

3. Public Engagement:

Our greatest challenge continues to be the ability to engage the general public in a debate on the importance and relevance of the educational system to the future of the province.

The provincial messaging to support funding cuts to public education has been framed around a graph, which shows the decline in student population over the past 10 years with major cost increases during the period suggesting the system can accommodate reduced funding. The tactic has been very effective as the province has a structural deficit and a significant long term debt.

School boards do accept that the province is faced with the difficult task of making tough choices, however, we are most upset by the lack of information provided by the province to share with the public the added supports put in place over the past 10 years to meet the needs of a very diverse student population.

4. Other Activities:

Other activities include a review of the learning needs of boys, implementation of a student information system and preparation for elections next fall. We are also working with the DOE to implement as a normal practice the PLC process at every school.

5. Public Awareness Campaign:

Finally, we are presently consumed with the process of developing a long range campaign to create awareness and interest by the general public in the public education system and the changes in needs, based on classroom composition. We are developing the campaign in concert with our Education Partners.