

NLSBA President's Newsletter

November 2, 2010

Autumn Update



Donald Brown, President

It is a privilege for me to send this autumn update on our activities to you. This newsletter format has condensed a lot of information; however, I assure you that I am available to elaborate on the contents of this letter or answer any questions that you may wish to raise at any time about our Association and its program of activities. I last wrote to you in late spring, and since that time much has taken place.

National Congress 2010

You are aware that for the past two years, the challenge of organizing, planning and delivering this event gradually consumed our provincial agenda. Indeed it became all consuming for us in the three or four months leading up to July. I am pleased to report to you that from an operational and a financial perspective Congress 2010 has been deemed an unqualified success. 387 delegates registered along with 120 registered guests. All the bills have been paid and a modest surplus was achieved. The conference evaluations and other informal feedback,

indicate that our theme was pertinent and our major sessions and breakout discussion groups were relevant and well presented. More detailed reporting on Congress is available from your own School Board. The provincial Board of Governors acted at the Steering Committee so your Chair and Director of Education have a complete package of information about Congress.

All major presentations and related information is available on the Congress Website at www.csbacongress2010.ca and the NLSBA site a www.schoolboardsnl.ca.



NLSBA Annual General Meeting

You will recall that our 2010 AGM was held on the eve of Congress and followed a more condensed format. The traditional Professional Development agenda was left to the Congress program and our meeting was strictly a business one. First of all I want to thank the delegates and School Boards for their vote of confidence in my re-election. The Treasurer for the 2010-11 year will be Dr. Ahmed Derradji of the CSFP. The NLSBA Constitution was amended to add the office of Vice-President. Mr. Milton Peach, from

the ESDNL will serve in that capacity for this year. Our current budget is still coping with a minor operations deficit. A small amount of the Congress surplus will be assigned to this for the coming year. The Board of Governors will bring a report to the 2011 AGM to more permanently deal with this deficit. The balance of the surplus will be used to establish a fund to support some appropriate professional development for you. This of course will be planned and controlled by our provincial Board of Governors.

Five Year Review

This year marks the fifth year of our operation since our inauguration in 2005. The AGM determined that as an organization this year's priority would be to review our operations and determine if revisions or fine tuning might be appropriate. The five Board Chairpersons have formed a planning committee to establish an Action Plan in this regard. On December 8, on the eve of the next provincial Board of Governors meeting, some recommendations will be prepared to

address this priority. While no major concerns have been noted, in the view of our Board of Governors it is fitting that we pause for a moment and review our organization at this point. Substantial changes were made to NLSBA in 2006. Each School Board will be involved in this process and it is my intention to visit each Board for some onsite local discussion on this topic. Our timeline is to prepare a report for the 2011 AGM.

School Board Elections 2009

An evaluation of these elections has been compiled and each School Board has discussed the topic. It is my intention to meet with the Minister of Education for an in depth discussion about these elections. While overall public participation has been low over recent

elections, the fact remains that public education requires a School Board that is accountable to its community and one that enables community input with respect to Board policy formation, goal determination and school district priorities. Otherwise, public education will transition into a school

service concept which may not provide a dedicated channel of local community involvement and direction for our education systems. This is a challenge for School Boards across Canada. Our province is not

alone in facing this struggle. The question is quite intricate as it involves the interplay of various government levels and funding regimes.

NLSBA Communications

Another matter which has been identified for action is the ability of our Association to communicate with its membership and the public generally utilizing more modern digital internet enabled methodologies. An effort will be

undertaken to revise our web site to make it more interactive and capable of providing more current and relevant information for trustees, Directors of Education, the Chairpersons and the public generally.

Canadian School Boards Association

I am proud to advise you that Nada Borden was re-elected as the National President of the Canadian School Boards Association. As many of you know Nada is a member of the WNLSD and a past President of NLSBA. While her election represents a tremendous vote of personal confidence from across the country in Nada's abilities, it also represents a compliment to each of our NL School Boards in that one of our own members was

deemed worthy of taking on this national role. Clearly our concerns are similar to the mainstream of issues facing other School Boards across our great country. The national association is continuing to refine itself and prioritize its program in an effort to support School Board governance and other identified national goals with respect to public education in Canada. We wish Nada well in fulfilling her mandate with CSBA.

Atlantic School Boards Conference

As you know this year's Atlantic conference for School Board members is being held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The theme is "*Abacus 2 What's Next*". The date has been shifted from the traditional January placement to November 25-27 on a trial basis. It will be interesting to determine if the experience

will lead to a more permanent date re-alignment. However, late January has always posed certain travel challenges. The agenda for the conference is quite pertinent for School Board trustees. If you haven't registered I urge you to give it some consideration.

Other NLSBA Priorities

Beyond our normal activities of liaison, committee representation, employer related collective agreement support, interprovincial representation, and providing professional development, several specific targets were noted by the AGM and the Board of Governors for action during the coming year. These include a discussion of the school calendar with the Minister from the viewpoint of increasing local planning flexibility, ATIPP implications for the release and usage of School Board documentation, and, the translation of some major NLSBA materials and policies into both official languages. The NLSBA is not a bilingual organization; however, some documents such as our Constitution should be available in both languages.

Resources for School Boards and School Board Trustees

Many School Boards throughout Canada are concerned over the level of understanding in their communities about the work of the School Boards and the function of the Boards and the Board trustees. After all, if no consensus exists around these questions on the part of everyone concerned, it will be impossible to protect and enhance our roles. Our provincial Board of Governors has directed that a resource portfolio of materials to assist us in this regard be compiled. A report will be forthcoming at our next AGM.

Provincial Election 2011

This will be an election year for our provincial Government. Therefore, it will be essential that our Boards be ready to advocate on behalf of

our schools and public education generally at that time. Topics include barriers and challenges for Trustee participation, local involvement in public education and various school district wide priorities and needs of both a capital and programming/personnel nature.

Collective Bargaining

All six collective agreements with the three Unions (CUPE, NAPE, and NLTA) will expire in 2012. The Staff Relations Specialist has begun the process of making early preparations of opening proposals for all collective agreements through meetings with District Staff, in cooperation with the Director of School Services at the Department of Education. A preliminary meeting was held in October and further meetings are scheduled for December 7- 8 with labour relations and human resource staff from each of the school districts. It is intended that draft opening proposals will be concluded by the summer of 2011, in anticipation of negotiations beginning by the late summer or fall of 2011.

Conclusion

I wish to reiterate my appreciation for the continuing support for our Provincial Association from each of our School Board members. A fundamental re-alignment of our provincial Association at the 2005 inaugural meeting was that it would primarily serve the interests that matter to its members. Our Provincial Board of Governors is responsible for this direction. It is essentially a new balance whereby the autonomy of each School Board is respected and a provincial office stands in related support of this.