November 13, 2018

Dear Applicant:

Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Our File #: EECD/023/2018)

On October 22, 2018, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) received your request for access to the following records/information:

"Any messaging prepared for the fall sitting of the House of Assembly during the month of October 2018."

A decision has been made by the Deputy Minister for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the department) to provide access to some of the requested information and the appropriate copies have been enclosed.

Access to the remaining records, and/or information contained within the records, has been refused in accordance with the following exceptions to disclosure, as specified in the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the Act):

Policy advice or recommendations

29. (1) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal (a) advice, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for a public body or minister;

As required by 8(2) of the Act, we have severed information that is unable to be disclosed and have provided you with as much information as possible. In accordance with your request for a copy of the records, the appropriate copies have been enclosed.

You may appeal this decision and ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the decision to provide partial access to the requested information, as set out in section 42 of the Act. A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner. Your appeal should identify your concerns with the request and why you are submitting the appeal.

The appeal may be addressed to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
2 Canada Drive
P. O. Box 13004, Stn. A
St. John's, NL A1B 3V8
Telephone: (709) 729-6309; Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500

You may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court Trial Division within 15 business days after you receive the decision of the public body, pursuant to section 52 of the Act.
Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five business days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information Requests website within one business day following the applicable period of time. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned by telephone at 709-729-7425 or by e-mail at KimAnstey-Stockwood@gov.nl.ca.

Sincerely,

Kim Anstey-Stockwood
Manager of Information Services
ATIPP Coordinator

Attachment
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Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Education Action Plan
October 16, 2018

Summary:


Key Messages:

- The Education Action Plan was developed in response to the 82 recommendations of the Premier’s Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes that aim to improve the quality of the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

- Over the past year, department officials have had ongoing consultations with more than 20 advisory councils, advocacy groups, professional organizations and other stakeholders, to discuss the recommendations and to explore opportunities for collaboration in their implementation. Their input played a significant role in the development the Education Action Plan.

- The Education Action Plan presents a five-year plan with timelines, responsibilities, and accountability structures for the implementation of all 82 recommendations.

- Thirty-one (31) of the 82 recommendations – more than one third – were completed or were well underway as of September 2018. Another 40 recommendations will be completed or well underway by September 2021 and the remaining 11 will be completed or well underway by September 2022.

- Several key recommendations regarding the deployment of new human resources (school-based reading specialists, teaching and learning assistants) and the infusion of new models and approaches of service delivery will be implemented through a three-year phase in. For 2018-19, 40 schools province-wide were selected to participate in the Phase 1 implementation, including a new Student Support Services Policy.

- The 40 schools represent a mix of urban and rural schools; large schools, medium size schools, and small school; and include schools with Indigenous populations and schools in Labrador.

- The number of schools engaged in the implementation of the Education Action Plan will increase over a three-year period. Year 1, now underway, involves 40 schools.
Year 2 will engage an additional 40 schools and in Year 3 all remaining schools will be included.

Secondary Messages:

- The Premier’s Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes was one of more than 50 initiatives included in "The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador". The Education Action Plan provides the timelines and structures for delivery on the Way Forward commitment.

- An accountability framework is being designed specifically for the Education Action Plan, in consultation with members of the committees established to develop specific work plans for the implementation of the recommendations. Each committee will report progress to a Steering Committee. The eight-member steering committee comprises deputy ministers from a number of Provincial Government departments (EECD; HCS; CSSD & AESL); CEOs/directors of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and le Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador; the Dean of Memorial University’s Faculty of Education; and the Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association.

- A Secretariat within Executive Council will monitor recommendations related to implementation of the Comprehensive School Health Framework, development of a year-round child health services model, promotion of ‘health in all policies for schools’, and the renewed commitment to a model of coordination of supports for children with complex needs. The Secretariat will also monitor the recommendations relevant to schools in the “Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador”.

- EECD will work with its partners to provide annual progress reports, publically, commencing in the summer 2019.

Prepared by: EECD Communications
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/114
Appendix 1: Sample recommendations implemented or well underway:

As of September 30, 2018, 31 recommendations, crossing almost all nine focus areas have been completed / adopted or are well underway. The complete listing is found in Appendix 2 of the Education Action Plan. Some of these include:

R-1: EECD, within one year of the release of this report, rescind the 1996 Special Education Policy (draft) and develop a new “Student Support Services Policy” that articulates how to implement a model of student support services, independent of a philosophy of inclusion.

- A new policy, Responsive Teaching and Learning, has been drafted. Components of the policy will be finalized as the policy is phased in over three years, beginning in September 2018.

R-7: EECD develop a model and a plan to introduce a second level of student assistants as 'instructional assistants' with levels of post-secondary education appropriate to the role.

- The model and plan has been completed and 54 instructional assistants (called Teaching and Learning Assistants) are being deployed in schools that are part of the Phase 1 of a three-year phase-in approach. Within three years, 200 teaching and learning assistants will be hired.

R-16: EECD hire a full-time librarian to manage the technology library and collaborate with the school districts to ensure that a school-based person, from every school, be given appropriate professional learning to optimize the use of alternate format materials and assistive technology in their school.

- A full-time librarian has been hired and work is underway on a professional learning plan for teachers to optimize the use of alternate format materials and assistive technology.

R-20: The Department of Health and Community Services conduct and conclude within one year of the release of this report a thorough review of the waiting lists for all child/youth related mental health services at each Regional Health Authority, and the Child Development waiting list at the Janeway Child Health Centre.

- HCS completed the review in March 2018.

R-37: EECD introduce a bursary program to encourage teacher participation in university level courses in mathematics content and pedagogy required for Grades K-6.

- EECD introduced a bursary program in May 2018.
R-39: EECD allocate six permanent K-6 mathematics program specialists with qualifications in mathematics, mathematics education and, where possible, qualifications in primary/elementary education.

- EECD has allocated six positions. The English School District has hired their allocation of mathematics program specialists and the Francophone School District is still advertising for a candidate.

R-44. EECD adopt a proven, research-based early assessment tool to be administered at the start of Grade 1 to identify students who require additional support in learning to read.

- EECD has adopted the research-based assessment tool to identify Grade 1 students who require additional support in learning to read.

R-47: EECD allocate five permanent program specialists with expertise in reading instruction to provide leadership and curriculum support to the school-based reading specialists.

- These five positions have been allocated and program specialists have been hired by the English School District.

R-75: EECD undertake an independent jurisdictional and substantive review of the Standards for Teacher Certification to be completed by Spring 2018.

- EECD completed a jurisdictional review, June 2018.

R-76: NLESD, CSFP and EECD hold an annual meeting with the Faculty of Education to discuss alignment of teacher education programs with the needs of the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador

- The partners held the first meeting, March 2018.

R-81: The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador appoint a steering committee to oversee the implementation of the EAP.

- The Premier approved the recommended members of the steering committee in November 2017.

R-82: Appoint an educational leader, reporting to the Clerk of the Executive Council, to lead the implementation of the EAP.

- Government appointed an Associate Deputy Minister to lead the implementation of an Education Action Plan, effective September 5, 2017.
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
K-12 Infrastructure
October 16, 2018

Summary:

The Provincial Government is committed to the development and redevelopment in the province's K-12 Infrastructure.

Anticipated Questions:

How much K-12 infrastructure has the Provincial Government committed to and invested in over the last few years?

Key messages:

- Over the next five years, our government will invest $120.6 million on new and expanded K-12 school facilities, $43.3 million in 2018-19.

- An additional $77.5 million in funding will be provided over this period for repairs and maintenance of existing school facilities. This is a total investment of $198.1 million.

- Since 2016-17, six new schools have opened with a combined cost of over $139 million.

Background:

- Six new schools have been opened since 2016-17:
  - Octagon Pond Elementary in Paradise opened in September 2016 at a cost of $22.8 million;
  - Admiral's Academy in Conception Bay South opened in September 2017 at a cost of $24 million;
  - Brookside Intermediate located in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's opened in September 2017 at a cost of $27.4 million;
  - East Point Elementary in St. John's opened in September 2017 at a cost of $20 million;
  - Juniper Ridge Intermediate in Torbay opened in April 2017 at a cost of $23.1 million; and
  - Gander Elementary in Gander opened in September 2017 at a cost of $20 million.

- In 2018-19, Government has budgeted $43.3 million in new and existing K-12 school infrastructure including:
  - $855,000 to commence replacement of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District's Corner Brook Bus Depot, which was destroyed by fire in Spring
2016. The demolition tender has been issued and the construction tender is expected to be issued in fall 2018.

- $1 million to commence planning and design for the replacement of Bay d’Espoir Academy, which was destroyed by fire in Winter 2017. The design-build tender is expected to be issued in Winter 2019.

- $400,000 to commence planning for a new K-12 francophone school in the greater St. Johns’ area. A request for proposals for consulting services is expected to be issued in fall 2018.

- $1.8 million to complete design and issue the construction tender for a new school to replace Coley’s Point Primary. The tender is expected to be issued in fall 2018.

- $2.4 million to complete remaining demolition and site work at East Point Elementary School in St. John’s. Work is ongoing.

- $4.3 million to complete construction of the extension to Mobile Central High. Work is underway with completion scheduled for early 2019.

- $3.1 million to continue construction of the extension to St. Peter’s Primary School in Mount Pearl. Work is underway with completion scheduled for Spring 2019.

- $1.4 million to complete design and issue a construction tender for the reconstruction of Gander Academy. The tender for partial demolition closed on August 20, 2018 and the construction tender is expected to be issued in Winter 2019.

- $9.6 million to issue a design-build tender for a new intermediate school in Paradise. The design-build tender is expected to be issued in fall 2018 with a second tender for the road/roundabout to be issued in winter 2019.

- $15.5 million to fund additional repairs and maintenance of existing K-12 school facilities province-wide.

Prepared by: C. Pickard / J. Dunne / B. Evans
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/110
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)  
Report of the Auditor General and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District  
October 17, 2018

Summary:

The Auditor General (AG) has completed her review into allegations of fraud within the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) and released the report on September 12, 2018.

On April 11, 2016, under the authority of Section 16 of the “Auditor General Act” (the Act), the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (LGIC) requested the AG to review the reported allegations of fraud within NLESD, including a review of the financial activities of NLESD, transactions for specific vendors and internal controls.

The audit covered the five-year period from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2016, and focused on the procurement transactions of the Facilities Branch in the Eastern region of NLESD and included an assessment of policies, procedures and internal controls.

We have been informed that CBC has contacted both the AG and NLESD for comprehensive follow-up interviews.

Key Messages:

- The issues that have been identified in the Auditor General’s report are not acceptable and our government has no tolerance for such actions.

- It is essential that public funds and assets are treated responsibly, and we demand accountability from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and all agencies, boards and commissions.

- Our government brought in the Auditor General to investigate this important matter. This highlights the seriousness of the issues that we identified at the time, as well as our commitment to greater accountability and ensuring that every taxpayer dollar is accounted for.

- We understand in discussions with NLESD that they have begun to implement various measures to mitigate risks identified in the AG Report, and we will continue to work with them to support implementation.

- While legislation gives NLESD a certain level of autonomy, we are engaged with them on a daily basis, which helps ensure openness and oversight.
Secondary Messages

- The Department of Finance began an investigation into this issue in 2016, but handed the investigation over to the Auditor General's office that same year.

- On June 14, 2018, the Provincial Government released details on its new fraud management policy for core government employees.

- The policy includes zero tolerance for fraud and a reporting structure for those wishing to report fraud.

- The Provincial Government works to find the best ways to reduce the risk of fraud and safeguard our assets.

- Our policy provides a framework to assist departments in developing fraud management practices, including fraud prevention and detection as well as awareness of fraud risks. The goal is to put in place an anti-fraud culture in government, and our educational entities are encouraged to adopt similar policies.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Board of Trustees and senior management should set clear expectations for ethical behaviour, that should include establishing and communicating a written code of ethics and conduct that integrates conflict of interest prevention and management to all staff, including consequences of noncompliance with these standards.

Key Messages:

- When we formed government we realized early on that a gap exists on a Code of Ethics, and core government did not have a Code of Ethics at that time.

- Staff in the Human Resource Secretariat have been working on a Code of Ethics for numerous months. They have undertaken extensive research, including a jurisdictional scan to see how other provinces and territories have approached this issue.

- The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to [ redacted ]

- Section 29(1)(a) of the [ redacted ]
• We encourage NLES to provide training to employees to promote a better understanding of the role and responsibility for ethical behaviour, including compliance with legislation and NLES policies and procedures.

• NLES is monitoring adherence to the standards of conduct, and working with government to establish a better reporting mechanism to help monitor standards and report suspected violations.

• We encourage NLES to investigate allegations of violations of the standards on a timely basis and take appropriate actions when allegations are substantiated.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Board and senior management should provide effective oversight on the development of performance of NLES's internal controls that should encompass a fraud risk management program, establishing a periodic evaluation policy and engagement with the Board and internal and external auditors.

Key Messages:

• On June 14, 2018, the Provincial Government released details on its new fraud management policy for core government employees.

• The policy includes zero tolerance for fraud and a reporting structure for those wishing to report fraud.

• The Department of Finance began an investigation into this issue in 2016, but handed the investigation over to the Auditor General’s office that same year.

• Fraud is a reality for many large organizations, and Government holds the school districts and all organizations that we engage with to the highest standard.

• We encourage NLES to develop a fraud risk management program that includes risk assessment to identify specific fraud risks and to mitigate risks to an acceptable level.

• We support conducting board meetings with both internal and external auditors at least annually to discuss any concerns identified with respect to all legal and financial matters.

Conclusion: The AG released her report entitled “Management of the Procurement of Goods and Services” to LGIC through the Minister of Finance in accordance with sections 16 and 31 of the ‘Act’ on September 12, 2018.
Key Messages:

- The Department of Finance has made the AG Report available online.

- We support openness and transparency in providing detailed information to the public.

- The report has been provided to the RNC and RCMP for further investigation into this matter and we will continue to cooperate fully with any ongoing investigations.

Prepared by: C. Pickard / B. Evans
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/95
Service NL
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
School Bus Safety
October 17, 2018

Summary:

The issue of school bus safety has received significant attention in recent months, following the Humboldt crash, several local accidents involving school buses, as well as an assault allegation. Furthermore, the Fifth Estate did an investigative piece that revealed a study by Transport Canada that said high-backed, padded seats on school buses did nothing to help children in side-impact and rollover crashes, reigniting the debate about seatbelts on school buses.

Anticipated Question:

Why are seatbelts not required on school buses?

What is the Provincial Government doing to help improve bus safety?

Key Messages:

- Transportation of students to and from school each day in Newfoundland and Labrador is very important for government, and we work with the school districts, operators and the industry to ensure it is as safe as possible.

- We follow federal standards on school bus safety and appreciate the importance of improvement as we continue to engage with Transport Canada and the school districts to explore opportunities to enhance safety measures through research, technology and best practices on the buses that operate on 1100 routes across the province.

- Decisions made by our government on bus safety will be informed by research and will involve in-depth dialogue with federal, provincial and territorial counterparts, school district officials and private bus operators.

- Stronger enforcement measures introduced in 2016 have led to a pass rating of 92.5 per cent for school bus inspections in the province (up from 84.4% in 2016). Enforcement officers inspect the entire fleet in the fall, and a minimum of 30 per cent of the fleet in the spring.

- Two major objectives of The Way Forward - government's vision document for the province – are better services and better outcomes for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.
Background

- School buses throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are held to extremely high safety standard, and are subject to rigorous inspection requirements.

- The Highway Traffic Act is amended on a regular basis in order to keep pace with safety issues and regular inspections and corrective measures are major components of school bus inspections.

- To be registered as a school bus in the province the vehicle must meet the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards as approved by Transport Canada, as well as CSA D250 standards.

- In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Highway Traffic Act requires that, where the federal government has required seat belts to be installed in a vehicle at the time of manufacture, those seat belts must be used by drivers and passengers.

- Currently, small buses (under 4,536 kg), with the exception of school buses, already require lap and shoulder belts.

- Transport Canada have conducted studies and advised that compartmentalized seating provides ideal safety conditions for school buses over seat belts. We understand that Transport Canada have announced they are reviewing their previous recommendations and findings, and the Province will be prepared to amend or adopt as required.

Prepared by: Service NL / C. Pickard / D. Ross / B. Evans
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/124
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
School Counsellors/Educational Psychologists
October 18, 2018

Summary:

Recently, the media (particularly CBC), have run a story about the lack of school guidance counsellors in the province’s education system. The story states that more Guidance Counsellors are needed to provide support to children and youth when it comes to mental health issues. Dean Ingram, NLTA President has stated that the system has ‘half the numbers the province needs’. The National Standard of 1:250 that was originally reported by Dean Ingram was incorrect and the NLTA informed CBC of this.

Anticipated Questions:

What is the Provincial Government doing to improve these numbers?

Key Messages:

- The Premier’s Task Force on Improving Education Outcomes (PTF) and the Education Action Plan identify student mental health and wellness as a priority for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

- The physical, mental and social well-being of students is essential in order for them to succeed in school and to improve their educational outcomes.

- We have allocated guidance counsellor service for all schools.

- As of October 2018, there are 166 full-time guidance counsellors for the 2018-19 school year, better than 1:400 ratio.

- There have been 43 educational psychologists allocated for over 10 years, despite declining enrollments. These educational psychologists also provide comprehensive assessment supports.

Secondary Messages:

- The current NL allocation formula, based on student enrolment, is 1:500; however, extra guidance services are allocated through a needs-based approach. Based on October 2018 data, the ratio for the 2018-19 school year is better than 1:400.
- Through implementation of its Education Action Plan (recommendation #22), EECD will be revising guidelines for comprehensive assessment, reducing guidance counsellor’s involvement in special education management and limiting guidance counsellor’s role in comprehensive assessment.

- Revised guidelines for a comprehensive assessment will be completed by September 2019.

- Through implementation of its Education Action Plan (recommendation #11), EECD and Health and Community Services will be undertaking a capacity review of educational psychologists to determine current strengths and needs. The process is scheduled to be completed by September 2019.

Prepared by: C. Pickard / A. Johnson/ B. Clarke / E. Churchill
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/116
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Student Assistant Hours
October 18, 2018

Summary:

In recent weeks, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) responded to questions raised by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association (NLTA) regarding the allocation of student assistant hours in the K-12 system. The NLTA spoke out after an Access to Information Request showed that the number of student assistant hours allocated this school year is below that recommended by staff.

Anticipated questions:

How are student assistant hours allocated? What is the rationale for approving student assistant hours? Who is responsible? Are there fewer student assistant hours?

Key Messages:

- We certainly value the work of our student assistants. They are an important part of any school team.

- The needs within a school can change from year to year as new students arrive and students move, change schools or graduate.

- To qualify to be considered for Student Assistant support, specific criteria must be met.

- Each spring, District staff members develop profiles used to help determine a school’s student assistant needs for the following school year. This process continues throughout the summer and into the new school year and may be adjusted according to changing needs.

- The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is responsible for deploying student assistants in all schools.

- Currently, there are approximately 3800 student assistant hours being allocated daily throughout the province to address the current needs of students who meet the criteria for support. There has been a small reduction of 50 hours fewer per day (province-wide) in Student Assistant allocation from last year (a decrease of less than 1%).
Background:

- To qualify to be considered for Student Assistant support, specific criteria must be met. A child must:
  - have few or no verbal skills;
  - have a severe mobility disability;
  - need help with toileting or feeding;
  - need help with Braille or ASL to access the curriculum, or
  - have severe safety-related needs – e.g., behaviour which poses a danger to themselves/others

School Needs Can Change
- There can be other reasons for changes, based on whether a child has developed a certain life skill which allows them to be more independent (because that’s the ultimate goal).
  - Some needs may have changed (e.g., a student may have needed help toileting in Kindergarten but no longer require this support in Grade 2).
  - Severe behavioural issues may have improved through programming and Behaviour Management Plans.

- The goal is to increase student independence, wherever possible. Some students will need support throughout the duration of their school years, but some may need less support over time, and some may become independent of supports.

Prepared by: EECD Communications
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/117
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Teacher Allocations
October 18, 2018

Summary:

EECD allocates teaching units to provincial school districts based on student enrolments and school configurations in September of the previous school year to that in which they are to be deployed. Various ratios are applied to the student population to generate a number of teaching units in defined categories. Additional teaching units are allocated beyond the ratios based on a variety of identified needs.

Anticipated Questions:

What is Government’s reaction to parents’ concerns of too many students in the classroom? How are teaching units allocated?

Key messages:

- EECD is in constant communication with the school districts regarding the resource needs in schools.

- The allocation of teachers is based on two components:
  - Formula: driven by actual enrollments, and
  - Needs based: driven by the identified needs of the school districts.

- The Department allocates teaching units to the school districts; however, it is the school districts’ responsibility to deploy these units to schools.

- The nature and makeup of schools varies greatly throughout the province. The allocation model provides flexibility to school districts to deploy based on individual student needs and local school circumstances.

Secondary Messages:

- School districts have the flexibility to deploy more resources in a particular area should a programming need arise.

Background:

- High School allocation uses one of three components, based on school size, to determine the high school allocation. The enrolments for Grades 10-12, as well as fourth year students are combined and divided by one of the following:
  - Large enrollment of students (100 students or more) is divided by 29 students
- Small – medium enrollment of students (< 100 students per grade) is divided by 24 students.

- EECD has allocated guidance counsellor service for all schools, and the current NL allocation formula for guidance counsellors is 1:500; however, extra guidance services that are required are allocated through a needs-based approach.

- There are 35 additional guidance counsellors for the 2018-19 school year due to the needs approach. This results in a better than 1:400 ratio for the school system.

- There have been 43 educational psychologists allocated for over 10 years, despite declining enrollments.

- There are currently 166 guidance counsellors in the school system; 35 extra guidance services were allocated through a needs-based approach.

- As part of the Education Action Plan, five additional Reading Specialists and six Mathematics specialists were allocated to the school districts to support student learning in reading and mathematics.

- The 40 Phase One schools of the Primary/Elementary Initiative received the following additional allocations:
  - 21.5 School-based Reading Specialists
  - 13 Teacher Librarians
  - 54 Teaching and Learning Assistants

- Another 40 schools will receive additional allocations for Phase Two of this initiative in the 2019-20 school year.

Prepared by: R. Smith / E. Churchill / C. Pickard
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/119
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs)
October 18, 2018

Summary:

The final report of the Premier’s Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, “Now is the Time”, released in July 2017, included a recommendation to create a new type of support position to work in the province’s schools. As part of the new Education Action Plan, EECD, with the assistance of a committee with representation from EECD, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLES), and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association (NLTA), developed a new position and a model for the deployment of Instructional Assistants. The formal name of this position is ‘Teaching and Learning Assistant’ (TLA).

TLAs work in diverse learning environments under the direction of a classroom teacher. They work collaboratively with other staff members and are supervised by the school administration.

Government has committed funding to hire 200 TLA positions over a three-year phase-in approach. The majority of the 54 TLAs have been hired for the 2018-19 school year and have been provincially distributed throughout 40 Phase One schools. An additional 50 will be hired in 2019-20, and another 100 positions will be added in 2020-21.

Anticipated questions:

What is the role of a teaching and learning assistant? When will they be put in place?

Key Messages:

- Teaching and Learning Assistant positions were implemented for the 2018-19 school year.

- Teaching and Learning Assistants work in diverse learning environments under the direction of a classroom teacher to support curriculum delivery. They may work with individual students or with small and large groups of students.

- Three days of training and professional learning have already occurred for the Teaching and Learning Assistants. More online training is planned throughout the school year.

- The majority of the positions for the Phase One schools have been filled and are in place for this school year. It is expected the remainder will be in place soon.

Prepared by: R. Smith / E. Churchill / C. Pickard
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/120
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Update on Implementation of EY Report on Provincial Public Libraries
October 17, 2018

Background:

The Provincial Information and Library Resources Board (PILRB) has posted its Future State Plan that addresses each of the recommendations in the EY report on the Organizational and Service Review of the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Library System. The Future State Plan is available on PILRB’s website.

Following the release of EY’s report in May 2017 which contained 18 recommendations, PILRB committed in its 2017-2020 Strategic Plan to develop a Future State Plan by March 31, 2018. PILRB formed six committees to review the key recommendations in the report and to inform the multi-year strategy with focus on the following areas: Programming; Collections; Technology; Facilities; Hours of Operation; and Locations.

Key Messages:

• Following a review of the EY Report, PILRB developed a Future State Plan that addresses all the recommendations and presents a roadmap for the future of the public library system in the province.

• PILRB will not be closing or relocating any libraries at this time despite the EY report recommendations to optimize the use of its limited funding by reassessing and adjusting the number and locations of public libraries in the Province.

• Implementation of all the Phase One goals in the Future State Plan will require additional funding ($1.71 million by 2020-2021).

• The EY report acknowledged that the Provincial Government provides more funding per capita than any other provincial jurisdiction, and Government will consider requests for additional funding as part of its regular budget process.

• PILRB is currently working on actions within the Future State Plan that do not require additional funding.

Secondary Messages:

• The department has ongoing communication with PILRB.

• Decisions related to the administration and service delivery model of the public library system are PILRB’s to make.

Prepared by: C. Pickard / J. Dunne / B. Evans
Approved by: E. Barnes

BN/18/121
1.6km Busing

Hansard May 5, 2016:

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Cape St. Francis. Mr. Speaker, 30 schools in 17 communities, resulting in 37 fewer bus runs servicing the students of Newfoundland and Labrador. I ask the minister: When will the parents be told what are the impacts of these new bussing plans?

MR. KIRBY: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I thought I was up. In case, Mr. Speaker, I we have had double bus runs in this province for some time and we know that, that does present additional challenges for parents. The school district is trying to find the best way to apportion the bussing resources that we have. We are investing millions of dollars in funding into bussing because the price of bussing has skyrocketed, its increasing on an annual basis. That’s the reason why we have double bus runs. That means there will be earlier pickups in some cases and later drop offs in the evening in others, but that’s nothing something that people across this province are unaccustomed to. That is a practice that has been in place for some and under the previous administration in fact.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the question was when will parents be notified about the changes in bus routes so they can be prepared for it? Is there something they can go online? Is there some information out there that they can find so they’ll know?

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite is just as capable of calling the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District to get that information as I am. Parents are getting that information from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District as that information is provided to schools. Parents will have ample time. What is it? Today is May 5, parents will have ample time, ample notification to know in advance of the school year whether they are impacted in any way by the double bus runs that are as a result of the skyrocketing costs of budgeting in this province. That is a simple fact. I can’t give the Member any more information. Parents will be given the information they need in due course.

MR. K. PARSONS: I ask the minister: Will they be consulted or can he name who will be consulted on these decisions?

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, parents will be consulted on the apportionment of busing funds and basically the specific bus runs, the routes and the schedules. They will be consulted on that exactly the same way they were consulted on that when the Members over there sat over here. Exactly the same process for consulting with parents about school busing will be followed as it was when those Members were over here for over a decade.
MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For years, the Member opposite sat in Opposition and pledged and promised to change the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Last week, the minister attempted to blame the school board saying that the rule was a school board policy, but documentation by the minister's own department clearly states that the rule is the policy of the department.

I ask the minister: Why haven't you made changes to the 1.6 kilometre busing rule?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

It's an honour for me to be able to respond. The Member opposite is entitled to his own fantasies, but he's not entitled to his own facts. The fact of the matter is we do have problems at the beginning of the year with school busing. I never, at any point, tried to say that the 1.6 kilometre rule was a rule of the school district. That is a policy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Most of the school busing problems are resolved with the courtesy seating policy at the beginning of the school year. Sometimes parents decline courtesy seating. That happened in one well-publicized instance.

That happens and that's the choice of parents. They can take courtesy seating. If that doesn't work for them, they're welcome to decline it as well.

Hansard: November 22, 2017
Issue: School Busing Safety

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.
In the last three years we have heard loud and clear from parents about unsafe conditions for their children walking to school. They are calling for a change in the school busing policy so children and youth are not walking on busy roads with no sidewalks or on roads because the existing sidewalks are full of snow. We need action now before another child or young person is injured or killed walking to or from school. I ask the minister will he create a flexible busing policy that allows for situations where the actions of functioning sidewalks puts young serious at serious risk.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as far as I know, are not responsible for sidewalks in municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for sidewalks in their communities. If there are dangerous conditions on roads municipalities should apply to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, or the Minister of Transportation and Works, whichever department to try to get funding in order to fix those sort of conditions. We already have a flexible busing policy, it's called courtesy seating and most of those problems with school busing are resolved within the first three to four weeks of school, as has been the case this fall. We have a total of one outstanding case at the moment.
Thank you.
MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So I’m asking the minister, is she saying that he has no concerns for the unsafe conditions that exist at this moment. Forget the future, right now at this moment; he has no concerns for the safety of our children?

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I’m a father of a primary school student. I am concerned about the situation in the schools in this province, of course I am. I didn’t say that I was. I don’t appreciate the Leader of the Third Party putting words into my mouth. I said if municipal roads are unsafe they should, municipalities, apply to government in order to get cost-sharing funding like other communities across this province have done. If there’s a particular circumstance that the Member is aware of she should bring it to the attention of a Member of Cabinet or the minister responsible, that way those issues can be resolved rather than throwing those sorts of allegations across the floor of the House of Assembly.

Hansard: October 16, 2017
Issues: 1.6 km policy, Bus Safety, Mobile Extension

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
For years the Member opposite sat in Opposition and pledged and promised to change the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Last week, the minister attempted to blame the school board saying that the rule was a school board policy, but documentation by the minister’s own department clearly states that the rule is the policy of the department. I ask the minister: Why haven’t you made changes to the 1.6 kilometre busing rule?
MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.
MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
It’s an honour for me to be able to respond. The Member opposite is entitled, Mr. Speaker, to his own fantasies but he’s not entitled to his own facts. The fact of the matter is we do have problems at the beginning of the year with school busing. I never, at any point, tried to say that the 1.6 kilometre rule was a rule of the school district. That is a policy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
Most of the school busing problems are resolved with the courtesy seating policy at the beginning of the school year. Sometimes parents decline courtesy seating. That happened in one well-publicized instance. That happens and that’s the choice of parents. They can take courtesy seating. If that doesn’t work for them, they’re welcome to decline it as well.
Thank you.
Hansard May 16, 2018

MR. BRAZIL: I ask the minister: Why the sudden push to enforce the 1.6 busing rule while it’s currently under review? Can we assume the review has been completed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I’m pleased to answer the question. The policy has not changed. Allow me to repeat that, the policy has not changed. Courtesy busing is still available.

What is happening here today is the English School District is applying consistency across the board, across the province on the 1.6 rule.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

Our understanding from the previous minister was that the 1.6 busing rule would be under review. So while under review, why are you automatically making this a big issue?

We are still asking: Is it under review? If it is, has it been completed? If it isn’t, then, obviously, this is going to be the standard and we need to deal with the situation around safety and people travelling on our roads.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will again repeat. The policy remains the same as it has been since some time in the 1970s, Mr. Speaker. There is now going to be consistency applied across the province by the English School District. Courtesy busing is still available.

I will also say, Mr. Speaker, the 1.6 distance rule is pretty consistent across the country. I can count probably at least eight provinces or seven provinces that have the 1.6 rule, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

So the thousands of parents who’ve weighted in, the multitude of municipalities, the number of agencies who have talked about safety here, who’ve lobbied government to do a review on this, obviously, this has gone on deaf ears.
I ask the minister: Will she look at lobbying the Minister of Education to do a full review on the 1.6 kilometre busing?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that the Minister of Education listens very well to what is happening in our province, listens very well to those who are utilizing the system: the parents, the students and stakeholders involved in this. I am very confident he would do that.

Unlike, I would say, the Members opposite who did not do anything under their watch on this issue.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Your petition, please.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** The petition of the undersigned: school age children are walking to school in areas where there are no sidewalks, no traffic lights and through areas without crosswalks and putting the safety of children at risk. Therefore, the petitioners call upon government.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure safety of all children by removing the 1.6 busing policy where safety is an ongoing concern.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this petition to the House now several times. It's a huge issue in my area. I heard the Acting Minister of Education today, the Minister of Natural Resources, talk about 1.6 and trying to get consistency and stuff like that, but I want to explain to the minister that there are a lot of areas in our province where safety should come foremost with regard to anything.

When it comes to our children, safety should be put forth no matter what. I live in an area where there's a lot of traffic. My school is in Torbay, there was a traffic count done showing that there are 17,000 cars a day that travel along this road. These roads have no sidewalks. There is no street lighting there to show there's a crosswalk there, and it's a huge issue.

While the minister today talked a little bit about courtesy busing, it's a very important part of mine, too. I'm talking about children in grade kindergarten to grade four. We really have to consider what we're doing here and the consequences that could happen with small children on these roads.

During this time of year it's not as bad, but in the winter months, Mr. Speaker, snow clearing is not the best. We're putting people out on dirt, gravel roads where ice buildup is a huge problem and safety is the foremost of my concerns. I'm really concerned about the safety of our children. They'll go back and say, you didn't do it or we didn't do it;
somebody do it. It has to be done because something is going to happen. This is about the safety of our children.

Where there are no sidewalks and where there's a lot of high traffic volume, we should have a look at it. I'm not asking to blame anybody or we were going to do it, you were going to do it. I'm asking for it to be looked at. Where there's an area where somebody could be seriously hurt or killed, please look at those areas.

It's about the safety of our children, and that's the reason why I'll continue to present this petition.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to respond to the petition as Acting Minister of Education today.

**MS. COADY:** I did rise in the House today and talk about the fact that there has been no policy change. I want to make sure people understand that there has been no policy change. The fact is courtesy seating will continue. The school board is now applying consistency.

I do respect the Member opposite for bringing forward the concerns. I think, obviously, the minister responsible will listen to those concerns, and it has been said. As has been indicated in the past, we are open to hearing what needs to be done.

I will say that providing a safe and reliable school transportation system always is foremost in the mind of this government. The budget of 2018 invested almost $59 million in school transportation system.

We look at our colleagues across the country, what's happening across the country. We listen to petitions, as was just presented, but we also have to be mindful that $59 million is invested in our busing transportation system. We do have to provide a safe, reliable school transportation system for this province.

**Hansard: May 29, 2018**

**MR. K. PARSONS:** The petition of the undersigned: school age children are walking to school in areas where there are no sidewalks, no traffic lights and through areas without crosswalks and putting the safety of children at risk. Therefore, the petitioners call upon government.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure safety of all children by removing the 1.6 busing policy where safety is an ongoing concern.

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Where there are no sidewalks and where there's a lot of high traffic volume, we should have a look at it. I'm not asking to blame anybody or we were going to do it, you were going to do it. I'm asking for it to be looked at. Where there's an area where somebody could be seriously hurt or killed, please look at those areas.

It's about the safety of our children, and that's the reason why I'll continue to present this petition.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to respond to the petition as Acting Minister of Education today.

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We look at our colleagues across the country, what's happening across the country. We listen to petitions, as was just presented, but we also have to be mindful that $59 million is invested in our busing transportation system. We do have to provide a safe, reliable school transportation system for this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find it really ironic today that the Members opposite talked about the fact it's a 45-year-old policy. They had the last 12 years to change that policy. So obviously over those 12 years, Mr. Speaker, they did not see fit that there was a safety issue or any other issue with the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Now all of a sudden it's a concern for them. I find that ironic.

Mr. Speaker, instead of spending more time just talking about what they've been doing or what they have not done over the last 12 years – again, it's important for all of us. This is a policy, if you do a jurisdictional scan across the entire country you will find that a 1.6 kilometre is in line with most of the provinces across Canada. It's something not unique to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I understand the 1.6 kilometre. I have four grandchildren that are actually going to school in Toronto. I'd like for them to go and research what happens in Toronto, in Ontario as well, when it comes to kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of that. When it comes to looking at where the school board is, it's certainly an issue that the school board is working within the policy that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
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