

Public Affairs Committee Report 2011-2012

a. Mandate

i. Political Action

A. The Committee shall maintain contact with all major provincial political parties through participation, as observers, in the annual meetings of each party. Following attendance at each annual meeting, the Committee shall report to the Provincial Executive.

B. The Committee shall monitor the policies and practices of the major provincial political parties for the purpose of identifying issues impacting on education. The Committee shall then advise the President and Provincial Executive of these issues and recommend appropriate political action.

C. During provincial elections, the Committee shall develop and implement a program focusing on the positive of the parties and their candidates with respect to education.

D. The Committee shall develop NSTU member awareness and urge member involvement in election campaigns.

E. The Committee will operate a hospitality suite at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of each of the political parties with representation in the N.S. legislature, as allowed by each party.

ii. Process and Technical Support for Local Public Affairs Committees

A. The Committee shall publish a Public Affairs Handbook for Local committees.

B. Subject to approval by the Provincial Executive, the Committee shall provide resource materials and training to assist Local committees in carrying out their mandate.

C. Subject to approval by the Provincial Executive, the Committee shall provide opportunities for Local committees to network and share.

D. The Committee plans, with Provincial Executive approval, an annual meeting of the Local leaders of Public Affairs.

E. The Committee shall identify educational issues for political action by the Provincial Executive.

iii. Information to Member Candidates

A. The Committee shall publish a handbook on conditions of employment for members interested in becoming political candidates.

B. The Committee shall compile a resource file of information relevant to political action in education and maintain this file in the NSTU central office.

C. The NSTU maintains its historical position of not attaching itself to any political party.

General

i. Consider such resolutions as may be referred by Annual Council and make appropriate recommendations.

ii. Participate as required in the NSTU Policy Review Process by providing recommendations for the Provincial Executive's consideration.

Composition

The Committee shall consist of three (3) Provincial Executive members selected by the Provincial Executive and five (5) NSTU active members chosen through the Nominating Committee process.

Meeting Frequency

It is anticipated that the Public Affairs Committee will be able to accomplish the mandated tasks through three meetings per year. The Public Affairs and Public Relations Committee shall have some common meeting times to allow for discussion and exchange of initiatives, concerns and objectives.

Reference: Provincial Executive, April 1988, March 1990, May 1994, June 2001, October 2002, July 2007

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Committee Members

The Public Affairs Committee was comprised of the following members:

Deborah Mitchell (Chair), Lunenburg County

Robert George, Colchester-East Hants

Kevin Pearle, Hants West

Graham MacLeod, Pictou

Deborah Mitchell, Lunenburg County

Bill Bruhm Provincial Executive Member

Eric Boutilier, Provincial Executive Member

Wally Fiander, Provincial Executive Member

Simon Wilkin, Staff Liaison

Meeting Dates

The Committee met on the following dates:

October 21, 2011 NSTU Joseph Howe Drive

February 10, 11, & 12, 2012 PC AGM at the Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel

April 13 & 14, 2012 Communications Conference at the Delta Halifax

June 8, 9 & 10, 2012 NDP AGM at Atlantica Oak Island

At the first meeting of the Public Affairs Committee on October 21, 2011, the following items were discussed:

- a) Welcome/Introductions
- b) Expense/Meeting Guidelines
- c) Selection of Recording Secretary Graham MacLeod
- d) Approval of Agenda
- e) Meeting Dates for 2011 and 2012
- f) Review of Public Affairs Mandate
- g) Review of Year End Report 2010-2011
- h) Attended the Provincial Executive meeting to hear discussions between the Minister of Education and Provincial Executive members
- i) Under New Business – The Committee reviewed
 - The Liberal AGM Agenda
 - Public Affairs and Public Relations Strategies for 2011-2012
 - 2012 Communications Conference
 - Take Your MLA to school campaign

Following the meeting, members of the Public Affairs Committee attended the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia AGM at the Westin Hotel where members discussed issues in Education with delegates attending the AGM.

The Public Affairs Committee put forth a recommendation the Provincial Executive that a special meeting be called for V.P.s of local's Public Affairs committee.

This special meeting was held on December 9, 2011 at the Tom Parker building for all V.P.s of local's Public Affairs committee. This was held to discuss a plan of action for the upcoming cut backs to education and the Take Your MLA to School campaign.

The second meeting of the Public Affairs Committee was held on February 10, 2012 at the NSTU Tom Parker building prior to attending the Progressive Conservative AGM at the Halifax Marriott Harbourfront.

This was a joint meeting with PA and PR Committee met to discuss the Communications Conference scheduled for Friday April 13 and Saturday April 14, 2012 to be held at the Delta Halifax.

The following items were discussed at the Public Affairs/Public Relations meeting:

- a) PA/PR Update
- b) Take Your MLA to School Goals of the province wide campaign were discussed.
- c) Kids Not Cuts Campaign
- d) Communications Conference planning for April 2012.

Following the meeting, members of the Public Affairs committee registered for the Progressive Conservative Annual General Meeting at the Marriott Harbourfront.

Members were on hand to host a hospitality suite on Friday and Saturday nights to discuss education issues with delegates from the Progressive Conservative party, in particular, cut backs to education and the impact on students in schools in our province for the up-coming school year.

On April 13/14, 2012, The Public Affairs Committee Co-hosted the Communications conference. It was held at the Delta Halifax. The focus of the conference was on delivering our message to Locals, our members, and the public.

During Annual Council 2012, Committee Chairs were requested to be available outside Council Chambers on Sunday morning for an hour to field questions from delegates on the role of the committees. The Chair of the Public Affairs Committee spoke with a number of delegates about the role of the committee and encouraged application to become a committee member.

On the weekend of June 8, 2012, members of the Public Affairs committee were observers at the New Democratic Party Annual General Meeting held at Atlantica Oak Island in Western Shore. Although the Committee was not permitted to host a hospitality suite at the New Democratic Party AGM, their presence presented the opportunity to discuss issues of concern with MLAs and party delegates.

There was one recommendation from the 2011-2012 Public Affairs Committee. That is that a Communications Conference in the Fall of 2012 rather than in the Spring of 2013. This would ensure that V.P.s of Public Affairs and members of local committees have an opportunity to a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities of their committee and enable them to network with other locals.

As the out-going Chair, I would like to extend my thanks to the Committee for their dedication, time and efforts on behalf of teachers in Nova Scotia. It has been a pleasure to work with members on a committee that so effectively brings educational issues before the political parties.

Additionally, I would like to offer a thank you to Simon Wilkin and Marcia Hirtle, for their assistance, guidance and support throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell