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Date: May 19, 2013 For Release: Immediately Contact: Angela Murray

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## Teachers debate public education issues at 92<sup>nd</sup> Annual Council

Some 261 voting delegates to the 92nd Annual Council of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union debated resolutions dealing with issues ranging from demands on teachers' time, providing adequate professional training for new initiatives, to securing a class cap of 25 for upper elementary, junior high and senior high.

"We've been through two years of drastic cuts to our system, and we know demands on teachers' time, class size and composition, and lack of resources has made teaching much more difficult," says NSTU president Shelley Morse. "Life in the classroom has changed drastically in the last few years. Students have higher needs; and we now have fewer supports and resources to help us deal with the growing complexities of education."

The annual meeting wrapped up Sunday in Halifax. From May 17 to 19, 88 resolutions were debated. The close to 400 voting and alternate delegates, and observers want the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to develop a disciplinary process for chronic behavioural issues in the classroom.

The need for more full-time guidance counsellors to meet the growing mental health needs of students was another focus. "Children deserve the very best services, and having every school in the province staffed with a full-time guidance counsellor is vital in allowing them to reach their full potential," continues Morse. "School guidance counsellors are the front line at school in dealing with students' mental health issues. We need to ensure every school has full-time guidance to deal with the myriad of issues students face in becoming successful learners."

Alison MacPherson, a primary teacher at A.G. Baillie Memorial School in New Glasgow, was elected by acclamation as first vice-president of the Union. She served on the NSTU provincial executive from 2006 to 2011 and was the second vice-president during the 2010-11 school year.

James Ryan, vice-president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation addressed delegates on Saturday, May 18. Outgoing executive director Bill Redden brought his final address to Council Sunday afternoon. Redden, who began his teaching career 37 years ago, joined NSTU staff in 1991. He marked his 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Council this year. He will retire on July 31.

The Nova Scotia Teachers Union represents 10,000 public school teachers, Community College faculty and professional support staff in Nova Scotia, and teachers who work for the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Since 1895, it has worked to improve the quality of public education for children and youth in Nova Scotia, while promoting and advancing the teaching profession.