

news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

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Education not a priority for Minister Ramona Jennex

HALIFAX - The Nova Scotia Teachers Union says today's cuts to school board funding show that education is not a priority for the Minister of Education.

"We believe the Minister of Education is misleading Nova Scotians by suggesting that a nearly 10 per cent cut to the education budget (when you consider this year and next year) will 'put students and learning first,'" said Alexis Allen, president of the NSTU. "You simply cannot expect to get more by spending less on education in a province that is already the second lowest in per pupil funding in Canada."

The cut comes at a time in our history when a quality education has never been more important to our future economic well-being. Today's announcement will allow class sizes to rise to levels that are detrimental to student learning.

Former Education Minister Jamie Muir in 2004 introduced a reduction in class sizes setting the maximum at 25 students in P-3 and with a target to introduce the cap in successive years by one grade a year until it applied to Grade 6. In announcing that new direction, Minister Muir said: *"Smaller class sizes can make an enormous difference in a child's learning experience, especially in the early years. Students in their classes are obviously benefiting from the extra attention these teachers are able to give."*

Obviously the current Minister of Education is ignoring the class-size research that led her predecessor to making this important change.

"Is the minister saying our kids today do not deserve the same opportunity as those just a few short years ago?" asked Allen. "Parents should be concerned that these successive two-year cuts to education will strip out millions of dollars that pay for programs and services to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners."

Allen said it is impossible to imagine how our educational system will function with 700 or fewer teachers as a result of this two-year "slash and burn" approach to education.

"Students WILL be affected by these cuts; there is no avoiding it," said Allen. "Our schools are being cut to the core resulting in larger classes, fewer supports, less time for individual attention and fewer courses to meet individual needs."

"We call on the minister to reconsider these cuts. This blind approach to balancing the province's budget will have long-term implications that will continue to be felt for several generations to come. The only way to improve our economy is through a well-educated, well-rounded public education system."

These cuts will hurt students and their ability to grow to become ready for a challenging future.

The NSTU, the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations and FPANE (Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse) are launching a campaign Monday to fight these cuts, urging all Nova Scotians to write their MLA or sign a petition.

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