

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
JUNE 10, 2004



TO: NLTA Members

FROM: Fred Douglas, President

RE: "It's About Time: A Study of the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students"

Enclosed is a copy of the abovenamed study relating to teacher workload in this province. This important piece of research by Dr. David Dibbon confirms scientifically what teachers have been reporting anecdotally about their workload and its impact upon students.

In the 1996 Collective Agreement, the Department of Education and the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association agreed to participate conjointly with the NLTA in the design, conduct and funding of a study to gather and analyze data related to activities in a teachers' workday/year. The committee, with representatives from each group as per schedule P of the 1996-2001 Collective Agreement, was established in 1999 and continued its mandate as per schedule M of the 2001-04 Collective Agreement. During the winter of 2003, the joint committee approached Dr. David Dibbon of Memorial University to develop a proposal to conduct a province-wide study on teacher workload. The proposal was agreed upon and the committee asked for the development of a research plan and diagnostic instruments. This process began in January of 2003 and it was hoped that the research would be conducted before the end of April. However, after reviewing the independently developed instruments and helping in the question refinement stage, the other two parties decided not to participate unless there were further modifications to the instrument and a narrowing in the scope of the study. At that point, the NLTA commissioned Dr. Dibbon to complete his work. It is important to note that neither the survey instruments nor the research methodology were altered after the other two parties withdrew their participation in the study.

This is a sophisticated and lengthy scholarly study which will require much of your valuable time to read and to digest, but I believe that it is imperative that each of us find the time to do so. Its findings echo clearly what you have had to say about many issues related to workload. Four of the major workload issues addressed are: class size; preparation time; curriculum and programming; and student supervision.

Please have a close look at the “selected summary highlights” sheet provided. It is important to note that the 52.32 total hours per week are compared with 35 hours per week required of other members of the public service. The myth of the five-hour day for teachers must be exposed for the fiction it is, and all members of the NLTA must speak to this frequently and authoritatively in every venue possible.

Also included is the statement I made on your behalf to the press at this morning’s release of the study. I invite you to read my press statement carefully, but I wish especially to highlight the following:

We are telling our members that, in the best interests of their students and for their own survival, they must put professional parameters around what they do. It cannot be business as usual in September. The health and well-being of teachers and the educational well-being of the children in our classrooms are of our utmost concern.

The school year is rapidly approaching a long anticipated end. This will most likely be the last communication that you will receive from me before September and is probably the most important memo I have sent to you this year. Certainly, this workload study is key to any improvement in the near future. Please take the time to study it carefully and to be very vocal with students, parents, friends, neighbours, church groups, service groups, community groups, etc. whom you encounter. Perception must change and it must begin at the grassroots of our communities – with the parents – as well as through the provincial and national media.

Have a safe and happy summer. Thank you for your input and support. See you in September.

Fred