

**Year End Report
2008-2009
Public Affairs Committee**

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 position 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 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. 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 Committees 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

Committee Members

The Public Affairs Committee was comprised of the following members:

Myla Borden, Chignecto-Central
Marlene Boyd, Provincial Executive Member
Russell Comeau, Provincial Executive Member
Jed Corbett, Provincial Executive Member
John Drish, Community College
Lee MacKenzie, Cape Breton-Victoria
Sandra Mitchell (Chair)- South Shore/Tri-County
Steven VanZoost, Annapolis Valley

Meeting Dates

The Committee met on the following dates:

- October 3, 2008
- February 6-8, 2009: While attending the Progressive Conservative Annual General Meeting
- February 27-28, 2009: While attending the Liberal Annual General Meeting

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- March 28, 2009: Fourth additional meeting was required as the New Democratic Party hosted a convention.

At the first meeting of the Public Affairs Committee on October 3, 2008, the following items were discussed:

- a) Expense/meeting guidelines
- b) Replacement of Chair. Lee MacKenzie regrettably stepped down due to personal circumstances and Sandra Mitchell was selected to replace him as the Chair of the Public Affairs Committee, pending the approval of the Provincial Executive.
- c) Review of Public Affairs Mandate
- d) Review of General Policy Statements for Council 2009
- e) Zone Contacts were established for Committee members
- f) MLA contact sheets
- g) School Board Elections and development of questions for School Board Candidates for the purpose of distributing to the Local VPs throughout the province.
- h) Review of Year End Report 2007-2008
- i) Political Strategy Handbook
- j) Joint Education Partners School Board Elections Committee
- k) Communications Conference
- l) Planning for the upcoming year

The second meeting of the Public Affairs Committee was held February 6, 2009, prior to attending the Progressive Conservative Annual General meeting at the Westin Hotel. The PA Committee met, conducted business and during the latter part of the afternoon held a joint meeting with the Public Relations Committee to discuss plans for the upcoming Communications Conference scheduled for April 17-18, 2009.

The following items were discussed at the Public Affairs meeting:

- a) Role of the Public Affairs Committee at the PC AGM
- b) Progressive Conservative Resolutions that referred to educational concerns
- c) Topics of priority to discuss with the delegates of the Progressive Conservative Party: Invest in Education, Workload Intensification, etc.
- d) Review of Council Resolutions for Council 2009

Following the adjournment of the PA meeting, committee members registered for the Progressive Conservative AGM and attended the evening session. Upon the close of the session Friday evening the PA Committee hosted a hospitality suite and received delegates to discuss educational issues. On Saturday, the Committee members attended sessions and hosted a hospitality suite during the evening. On both evenings the hospitality suite was a busy spot with

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members of the PC caucus and general delegates engaging in the topic of the importance of education for our youth from elementary to post-secondary. On Friday evening we had in attendance the Premier, the Minister of Education and our Provincial President; the importance of adequate funding for education was discussed.

The third meeting of the Public Affairs Committee was held February 27, 2009, prior to attending the Liberal Party AGM, at the Westin Hotel.

The following items were discussed at the Public Affairs meeting:

- a) Communications Conference update
- b) Role Of Public Affairs Committee at the Liberal Party AGM
- c) Recommendations for the PA Committee 2009-10 (Recommendation to be referenced later in report.)

A fourth meeting was required this year as the New Democratic Party held a party convention on March 28 at Pier 21. Prior to the beginning of the Convention the committee held a brief meeting to discuss a request from the NSTU Provincial President. At Annual Council 2009, Committee Chairs were requested to sit outside Council chambers on Sunday morning for a brief time to field questions from delegates regarding the role of the various provincial committees. The PA Committee agreed that this was a worthwhile endeavour ; the Chair would be present to provide information to delegates during Annual Council 2009.

To conclude the year the PA Committee co-hosted the Communications Conference on April 17-18, 2009. The focus of the conference was to provide information to locals as it related to the importance of adequate funding for education. Information was also provided to assist locals in preparation for the upcoming provincial election. The conference was well attended and the staff of the NSTU did an excellent job of ensuring smooth running of the conference.

Recommendations:

The Public Affairs respectfully submits the following recommendation:

All meetings of the Public Affairs Committee held during any of the Political Party AGMs in 2009-2010 be held in or near the hotel where the Political Party AGM is taking place.

Meetings of the PA Committee generally take place at the Union building. These meetings as a rule take place at 2 pm and often do not end until 4-4:30 pm. The AGMs of the Political Parties in past years have taken place in downtown Halifax and often begin late afternoon.

It is very difficult to get to downtown Halifax during the late part of the afternoon and the Committee members have to register at the hotel, register for the AGM and then be prepared to attend the sessions almost as soon as they arrive. The members have noted that they do not have the opportunity to adequately prepare and often do not have the opportunity to have dinner before attending the sessions, which often go until 9 or 9:30 pm.

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By having the PA meeting at the hotel where the AGMs are being held will help to alleviate some of the stress of having to fulfill the purpose of attending the AGMs.

Public Affairs Committee Budget 2008-2009

Budgeted amount- \$18,612.00
Actual - \$18,169.98

The Public Affairs Committee was very busy this year with the federal, provincial and school board elections. Our presence at the AGMs allowed the Committee the opportunity to discuss educational issues with MLAs and party delegates.

The Committee offered support to the committees at the Local level and helped in the organization of another successful Communications Conference.

As the out-going Chair I would like to extend my thanks to the Committee for their dedication, time and efforts. Additionally I would like to offer a thank you to Grant MacLean for his assistance and guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Mitchell