

N.L. opposition says new formula means fewer teaching positions

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[CBC News](#)

The Newfoundland and Labrador government's new teacher allocation formula sparked criticism Tuesday from both the opposition and parents in rural communities.

The opposition said rural schools in particular will have fewer teachers in September than they did last year. CBC News confirmed that 17 schools in Labrador are losing teacher positions. The Liberals claimed that at least eight schools in Newfoundland are also losing positions.

"Why is it acceptable to have schools with [kindergarten to Grade 3] grades in one class now expanded to [kindergarten to Grade 6] in one classroom with one teacher?" Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones asked during question period on Tuesday.

Education Minister Joan Burke said the total number of teachers in the school system will actually increase this year, but it doesn't mean some schools won't lose teachers. Under the new allocation formula, the number of teachers a school receives is based on its programming needs instead of its student population.

As some schools get smaller, Burke said, they will be able to offer the same amount of programming with fewer teachers. A school can lose a teacher with no loss of programming or increase in class size, and that teaching position can be put in another school that needs it, she said.

"The new allocation model allows the school boards and the schools to work together to determine the needs of the school," she said.

Parent Diane Poole, who lives in the small Labrador community of St. Lewis, said she was shocked to hear her son's school is losing a teaching position next fall.

"We'll still have 43 students there. It looks like maybe the [kindergarten to Grade 6] will be in one classroom — 13 students. Every grade has to have its own curriculum. Just imagine trying to juggle that. The teaching time is not going to be there," she said.

However, Allen Skanes, assistant director of education for personnel for the Western school district, which has jurisdiction over some Labrador schools, said even with the new model, the pupil-teacher ratio is still quite acceptable.

"We are looking at every one of our schools and saying, with what we have given out to the schools, we feel that they can provide a good educational program for the students in their school," he said.