

Rural schools to be down teachers: Jones

*Says new allocation formula
doesn't add up*

BY DAVE BARTLETT

THE TELEGRAM

The provincial Liberals say the province's new teacher allocation formula doesn't add up for rural schools.

The new formula was announced in March and is supposed to be based on needs as opposed to enrollment.

Opposition Leader Yvonne Jones says it gave her the impression that schools around the province would not lose teachers.

Jones has compiled a list of at least 15 schools that will be short teachers in September. ☼

A few schools on the list include St. Michael's school in Stephenville Crossing, which will lose three positions; Harnett Curtis Collegiate in St. Anthony and Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts, which will each lose two.

In the House of Assembly on Tuesday, Jones asked Education Minister Joan Burke why these schools are losing teachers.

The minister blamed the previous Liberal government for a poor system that the current government is trying to fix.

"When we look at the teacher allocation in this province, it's done in a fair and equitable manner," said Burke during question period.

But Jones says the new formula is not fair to rural schools.

"Teachers in small schools around the province are already struggling to meet the demands of curriculum that is being placed upon them by the Department of Education and yet we hear this new model is going to further reduce (teachers) in a lot of these schools," said Jones.

Jones said she talked to one school where a person who teaches kindergarten to Grade 3 in one room will now have the added responsibility for up to Grade 6.

"Why have the rural schools been targetted for reduction and more multi-grading in those classrooms?" Jones asked Burke.

Burke said the new formula will assist schools in rural parts of the province because the plan will cap class sizes from kindergarten to Grade 9.

"If there is an elementary or primary class that meets that cap size or exceeds it then, instead of having a (partial) position, we will actually have two positions."

But Jones told the minister that didn't add up.

"I have a list, right now, of schools that are losing (teachers)," she said.

"Why is it acceptable to have schools with K to 3 grades in one class now expanded to K to 6 in one classroom with one teacher?" Jones asked.

Burke answered by saying the government allotted \$3.6 million in last week's budget for more teachers.

She also jabbed Jones by saying the former Liberal allocation formula would have cut 144 teachers in this year and 124 positions for the coming year.

Jones admitted the old system was flawed and noted it has not been used for five years.

At that point the House erupted with government members heckling Jones.

Jones concluded by asking the minister to table a complete list of schools in the province listing the number of teachers for this year compared to next year.

Burke said she would when she had that information.

Outside the House, Burke said those numbers would be available in a week or so.

The minister also admitted that some schools may lose teachers.

"There may be some shifting in the resources, so there may be schools who gain positions and there may be other schools that may lose positions," said Burke.

Jones wants the minister to review the schools losing teachers.

"I don't think we want a situation in our schools like we now have in our hospitals where we have teachers with an extreme amount of workload to the point where they are being burnt out," Jones said.

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