



The Signal

Newsletter of the Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Hello Members,
With winter upon us and the hustle and bustle of the holiday season behind us, it is time to turn our attention to the year ahead.

I would like to begin by acknowledging each and every one of you for your commitment to your profession and to NLASLPA. As I transition from President-Elect to President this year, I am continually reminded of the dedication, effort, and passion that our members bring to maintaining and advancing our association.

NLASLPA may be small, but it is mighty. Together, our voices are strong and carry far. Thank you to our volunteers for their time and ongoing advocacy efforts, and to our members who stay engaged with the association in whatever ways they are able. Your support truly makes a difference.

As an executive, we have now settled into our roles,

and our strategic plan and priorities for the year are taking shape. I am pleased to welcome Lori Greene as President-Elect and Alysha Cooze as Director-at-Large. We are excited to have you join the NLASLPA executive and are looking forward to collaborating with you over the coming year. I would also like to extend sincere thanks to our outgoing executive members, Taylor Robinson (Past President) and Oriana Pittman

(Director-at-Large), for their dedication and exceptional service to our membership. It has been a pleasure learning and growing alongside you, and I hope the year ahead brings you more time to enjoy the things that bring you joy. We are also pleased to welcome back Susan Lawlor as Past President, Katherine Moffat as Treasurer, and Caitlin Mullallay as Secretary. I am confident that this strong team will make the year ahead both
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PRESIDENT’S REPORT (CONTINUED)

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Terri Kennedy

productive and rewarding.

With the executive transitions complete, the committee is now preparing to organize government meetings to support our ongoing advocacy efforts. Committee members have met with the SAC Advocacy Manager to discuss issues relevant to our professions and to connect with other associations across the Maritimes. We hope to strengthen networking opportunities with other provinces and territories as SAC works toward aligning shared priorities. Through upcoming government meetings, we aim to ensure our collective voices are heard and that the concerns raised by members at our Annual General Meeting are clearly communicated. Continued advocacy—both at the government level and within our workplaces—is essential to strengthening our professional voice and improving client care.

NLASLPA remains committed to prioritizing the concerns and initiatives of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists in our province. I encourage

members to contact me at president.nlaslpa@gmail.com with any questions, concerns, or suggestions. I also encourage you to engage with our social media platforms on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter by liking and sharing posts. Every action, no matter how small, helps raise public awareness and keeps our membership connected.

As we begin a new year, we look to carry forward the momentum built in 2025 and move ahead with the passion and enthusiasm fostered by last year’s executive. Thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility and for the opportunity to represent our membership as President this year. I am truly grateful for your confidence and am committed to serving the membership to the very best of my ability.

Warm regards,
Terri

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Hi Members!

As I sit to prepare this issue of The Signal, it’s the 17th day of the second week of January and we are in the firm grasp of winter. I am excited to have two new faces join our committee. Thanks to Kelsi and Natalie for coming onboard! Our newsletter is always a labour of love and I’m always excited to share it with fellow committee members and the general membership. Remember this newsletter is about and for our association and its

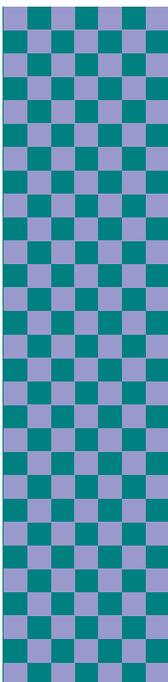
members. If there is something that you’d like us to feature, let us know!

Happy Reading!

Lisa Payne

We welcome your feedback. Any comments, ideas or submissions may be forwarded to:

lisa.payne@nlhealthservices.ca



SAVE THE DATE!
NLASLPA GENERAL TELECONFERENCE

The spring General Teleconference is scheduled for:

March 20th, 2026 at 9:00-10:30 am

Meeting link, agenda and discussion materials will be sent closer to the meeting.



COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The production of the newsletter is a product of our committee members. Our current committee members are:

- Kelsi Fry
- Katelyn Mayo
- Lisa Payne
- Natalie Penney
- Nancy Scott

COMING EVENTS

SAC & CAA Webinar: Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program. This session will provide an overview of the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program, with a focus on audiology-related benefits, eligibility, and processes. Designed for NIHB prescribers and providers, the webinar will highlight covered audiology supplies and equipment, required documentation, and how to access program forms and information.

Date: February 25th 12:00 EST

Location: Online (recording available afterwards if a member of SAC)

Link: [SAC & CAA Webinar: Non-Insured Health Benefits \(NIHB\) Program - SAC](#)

Atlantic Town Hall. Join us for an important town hall to launch a Regional Advisory Group for the Atlantic Provinces. This group will provide insight and guidance on advocacy priorities, emerging issues, and regional perspectives to strengthen collaboration and support members across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland & Labrador. Together, we can strengthen our voice and impact across the Atlantic region. Open to Audiologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Communication Health Assistants.

Date: March 4th, 2026 at 7pm AST

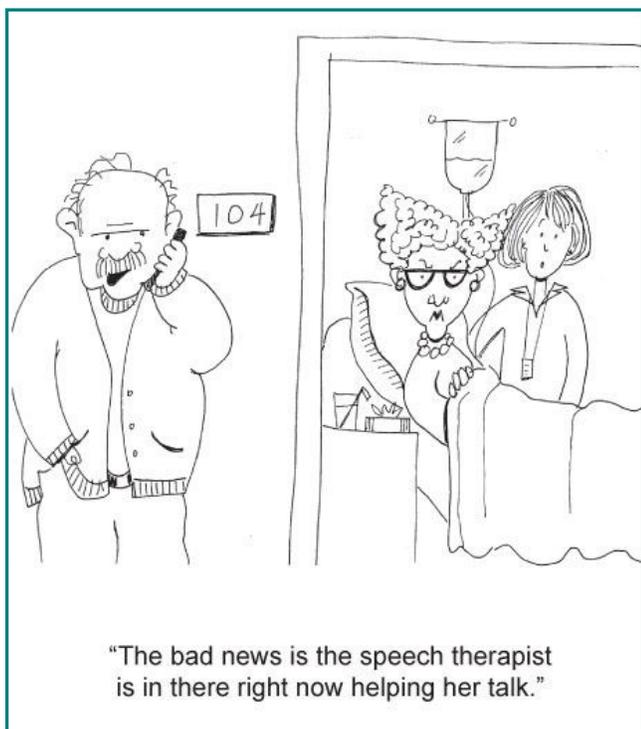
Location: Online

Link: [Speech-Language & Audiology Canada](#)

SAC Conference. The SAC Conference is Canada's largest national gathering of speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and communication health assistants. It will bring together our professional community from coast to coast to learn, share, and celebrate the important work we do. Join us to strengthen your skills, exchange knowledge, reconnect with peers, and of course, have fun! This year's theme is "From Eh to Zed: Strong Roots, Anchored in Connection" and reflects the strength, diversity, and unity of Canada's communication health community – rooted in shared values and anchored in connection.

Date: April 30-May 2nd, 2026

Location: Halifax, NS



NLASLPA: BEHIND THE SCENES

From time to time, The Signal features a committee or activity that works on behalf of NLASLPA. While members are often knowledgeable about the works of the executive, the various standing committees and ad hoc committees help keep NLASLPA’s wheels turning.

Government Liaisons:

Education—Kimberlyn Cranford

Health—Laura Brown & Jane Bowering

What are Government liaisons?

Government liaisons are relatively new positions for NLASLPA. These are elected and volunteer positions.

Why do we need Government liaisons?

The NLASLPA executive recognized the need to improve consistency in government meetings in light of the transitional nature of executive terms. A liaison position was established for the Department of Education. The pilot was considered successful and two liaison for the Department of Health were created, one for SLP and another for audiology.

What is the term for a liaison?

3 years



WHY AUTISM ADVOCATES ARE CELEBRATING BARBIE'S FIRST-EVER AUTISTIC DOLL

In an attempt to help “more children to see themselves represented in Barbie,” toy creator Mattel Inc. is releasing their first-ever autistic Barbie doll. The doll was created with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN). Noor Pervez, the non-profit's community engagement manager, said they aimed to help autistic children see themselves, and also deliver a message to non-autistic people. “We want people to kind of get an early reinforcer,” Pervez said. “And to be able to pass down to their kids this early reminder that autistic people are a normal and valuable part of our communities.”

Advocates helped choose the doll's unique features over 18 months of development, Pervez said. For example, the eyes of the new Barbie shift slightly to the side to represent how some autistic people sometimes avoid direct eye contact, he said. The doll also has mobile elbows and wrists to acknowledge stimming, hand flapping and other gestures that some autistic people use to process sensory information or to express excitement, according to Mattel. It also comes with a fidget spinner for similar sensory reasons. The development team debated whether to dress the doll in a tight or a loose-fitting outfit, Pervez said. Some autistic people wear loose clothes because they're sensitive to the feel of fabric seams, while others wear figure-hugging garments to give them a sense of where their bodies are. They opted for a looser garment that would minimize skin contact, as well as flat shoes, given that some autistic people struggle with sensing where their bodies are in space. The doll also comes with a tablet, Pervez said, to add representation for non-speaking autistic people. And given the fact that autistic women and autistic people of colour are less likely to be correctly identified as autistic, the team decided to make their Barbie both of those things.

Girls under-diagnosed

Deepa Singal, scientific director of the Autism Alliance of Canada, said under-diagnosis of girls is a serious issue, and one wider representation could help to rectify. “That's not because there are more autistic boys, but girls have just been under-diagnosed over the years because it's been missed,” she said. “And some moments like this really helps shift that understanding.”

The doll's non-speaking representation, she said, helps to normalize “alternative ways of expressing needs, preferences and emotions,” while also reinforcing the fact that supportive communication needs are “simply a different way [of] interacting with the world.”

Barbie is now part of a slow shift in children's entertainment. Sesame Street introduced an autistic character, Julia,

in 2015 — though controversy around the character's promotion of some parent resources caused autism advocates like ASAN to condemn and part ways with the program. Meanwhile, other toys — like Walmart's “My Life As Autism Advocate” and a one-off astronaut doll based on a real Irish boy — have popped up in the past. But, Singal says, the mainstream quality of this Barbie helps cement an important message. “For an autistic girl who has rarely seen herself reflected, seeing an iconic and globally celebrated toy celebrate being autistic sends a really powerful message,” she said. “And that message is, ‘I belong.’”

Barbie's 'Fashionistas'

Mattel's new doll is part of their Fashionistas line, which also includes dolls representing individuals with type 1 diabetes, Down syndrome and who are blind. The Fashionistas also include a Barbie and a Ken with a prosthetic leg, and a Barbie with hearing aids, as well as different body and hair types and skin colours. “Barbie has always strived to reflect the world kids see and the possibilities they imagine, and we're proud to introduce our first autistic Barbie as part of that ongoing work,” Jamie Cygielman, Mattel's global head of dolls, said in a statement. Pervez says that was a direct inspiration for his participation in the project. Pervez, who uses a wheelchair, explained how he had early memories playing with Mattel's Becky “Share A Smile” doll — Barbie's friend, introduced in 1997, who used a wheelchair. “So I learned pretty early on that some people use wheelchairs and that's just kind of like — she's part of the crew just like the other dolls, right?” Pervez said. “This is kind of in that vein. It's a way for kids to build empathy and understanding that autistic people are part of their world — in the same way that all of these other dolls are part of their world.”



NLASLPA's Address

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Submissions/Enquiries

Letters to the Editor, commentaries and other submissions (including photos) are welcome. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit submissions for length and clarity. Please forward your submissions to:

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Publishing Information

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ADVERTISING IN NLASLPA'S SIGNAL

Employment and business advertisements will be published according to the fee schedule below. Seminars, conferences and workshops are advertised free of charge. For more information please contact Newsletter Committee Chair.

Advertising Procedure:

- Advertisers will be charged as follows:
Business Card: \$20.00
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St. John's, NF A1A 5B2
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(1) NLASLPA (see above) or
(2) Care of the Newsletter Editor.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF!

Each fall, the executive transitions and we welcome a new NLASLPA president. Let's get to know our incoming and new president Terri Kennedy!

Where were you born?
Marystown, NL

What is your educational background and where did you study?
I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Psychology from Memorial University in 2004. In 2006, I graduated with a Master's Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois.

What is your current job title?
Speech-Language Pathologist III and Clinical Lead for NLHS Central Zone.

Where do you call home?
I have two homes. Gander has been my home for the past 20 years, where I'm raising my beautiful family. Marystown will always be 'home' as well—it's where I grew up and where my family still lives. I think for most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians,

ans, "home" can be defined either by the people or the location.

What do you like best about Newfoundland and Labrador?
Our people and our culture. The traditions and values that weave us together make us unique, compassionate, and strong.

What are your professional interests?
I have a wide range of professional interests, but my primary focus has been AAC, Autism, and pediatric rehabilitation through my work with Janeway Outreach. I truly enjoy working as a Speech-Language Pathologist and I find all aspects of our profession rewarding and interesting.

What is your favorite aspect of your profession?
I love working across the lifespan. Every

workday is dynamic and different, which helps me stay engaged and motivated.

What is the one thing everyone should stop complaining about?
The weather! Every day is a good day, and practicing gratitude—even for wind and snow—is essential for maintaining a positive mindset.

What are you reading at the moment?
Daring Greatly by Brené Brown. If you are unfamiliar with her, I would encourage you to check out some of her writings on courage and vulnerability and on leadership.

Who inspires you?
My children. They navigate the world with bravery, curiosity, and confidence, and they inspire me every day to do the same.