

Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

Question	Page
1. a) The Association has just started another round of collective bargaining for a new collective agreement. What do you feel are the key priority issues in this round and why?	... 2
1. b) How far do you think teachers are willing to go to see these priorities addressed? 4
2. The Department of Education's philosophy of inclusion is being implemented by school districts throughout the province. What are some of the key issues for teachers that arise from its implementation, and how do you think these can be addressed?	... 5
3. What would you do to ensure fair hiring practices for non-tenured teachers and to ensure that non-tenured teachers are able to have their issues addressed? 7
4. Given that there are recruitment issues for speech-language pathologists (SLPs), how would you lobby government to provide a bonus structure similar to other specialist's positions within the school system, as well as lobby for student SLP ratios as recommended by Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)?	.. 10
5. What role do you see NLTA playing with the changing structure of small schools and their dynamics (class composition, Service Delivery Model, lack of and, in some instances, no prep time, teacher workload, etc.)?	.. 12
6. What role do you see the NLTA playing in light of recent decisions by school boards to close small schools in rural communities?	.. 14

Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

(Note: Edited only for typographical errors.)

1. a) The Association has just started another round of collective bargaining for a new collective agreement. What do you feel are the key priority issues in this round and why?

Bill Chaisson

The Collective Bargaining Committee established a well-focused set of priorities based upon submissions from teachers. Guaranteed leaves, preparation time, a return to previous sick leave provisions for all teachers and the elimination of lunchtime duty remain priorities for teachers.

That being said, we are negotiating in changing times. We are dealing with an employer who seems to want to strip our Collective Agreement. By opening on so many articles in this round of negotiations, the employer is sending a clear message that they are looking to take back some of the gains we have made in previous rounds of negotiations. Our priority must now be the protection of every article in our Collective Agreement and to send a clear message to the employer that contract stripping of any kind will damage education in this Province and have a negative impact upon the professional and personal lives of teachers.

Derek Drover

Education is an investment in the long-term growth of our province. Investing in education and teachers who deliver it should be priority #1! As Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested, "We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future." We must prevent the stripping of our contract and seek gains that encourage the recruitment/retention of teachers who provide children with the skills to succeed as adults. Protecting our pensions, Group Insurance, severance, Schedule E, Article 29.07, and salary improvements at least accounting for CPI increases are paramount. Improved class size caps, teacher allocations, family/personal/sick leave, and a maternity/parental leave EI top-up are long overdue. We must allow the negotiations process to unfold and our level of success will determine future actions as decided by the collective will of our members.

Kevin Flynn

Some of the key priority issues in this round of bargaining are Severance, Sick leave and Teacher Pension Benefits. The elimination of the accumulation of further

severance for all teachers and no severance for teachers with less than nine years of service will further divide the Association. In addition, the two-tier sick leave system for new and experienced teachers needs to be re-vamped. Young teachers are often forced to avail of Long Term Disability because of their access to a limited number of days per year. As well, the government continues to stress the need to address the pensions of teachers. This can only mean one thing – cuts. Teachers need to fight to have their pension benefits remain intact; if not, government will make devastating and unnecessary cuts and place undue stress on teachers.

Craig Hicks

In preparing our opening proposal all members had an opportunity to have their voices heard regarding issues they felt were important. The Collective Bargaining Committee was responsible for developing the priorities that would be included in the opening package. I feel that each priority has its own merit and was selected because it would improve our profession. However, government's opening package included the elimination of severance pay and the elimination of the protection for pension benefits provided in Schedule D. No doubt, these have become major issues that we must deal with at the negotiating table.

Trent Langdon

The NLTA is at a pivotal point as we move forward with collective bargaining. There are larger trends of contract stripping and an unwillingness, on the part of the employer, to make concessions that will result in the enhancement of our contract.

The most disconcerting issue is the anticipated hit on our pensions. Given the current political atmosphere and the ongoing battles with public sector unions, we must unite, committing to protect our futures and laying claim to what is rightfully ours. It is essential that our Association secure the integrity of our daily experience by controlling workload expectations and class sizes, restructuring the inclusive model, and further establishing our professional rights in the areas of family leave and on-the-job safety.



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

Our professional and personal futures cannot be compromised by the setting of precedents during this round of bargaining that will disadvantage us in future negotiations and for years to come.

Jean Murphy

Teachers across Newfoundland and Labrador have strongly expressed their desire to see improvements in workload, leaves, hiring and supervision. This has not changed. Teachers still want improvements in our Collective Agreement to address these concerns. While we seek improvements in our Collective Agreement the employer is seeking to eliminate some of the benefits we presently have. We cannot allow this. Contract stripping cannot be allowed to happen.

Sandra Quigley

Most importantly – retain the benefits we already have including Schedule E, severance and pensions, provision of substitutes, consent to serve on committees/extracurricular activities. We should continue to work for gains in leaves, relief from lunch hour supervision, and closure of the three-week pay gap. A modest raise would be reasonable as well.

Sherri Rose

The Collective Bargaining Committee identified several key priority issues. Of those identified, I feel that leaves with pay, sick leave, workload, supervision and hiring are the five that reflect the issues that come up again and again at Joint Council, BGM, branch meetings and staffroom discussions. Every year, things get added to our list of responsibilities, yet nothing seems to be removed. Getting a day to take a sick child to the doctor is often a source of frustration and we still eat our lunch in a hurry while doing supervision. While these are key issues, after seeing the employer's proposals, it is clear that our priorities must shift. Not only must we work to ensure that these issues are addressed, we must work to ensure that the toxic proposals of our employer never reach our Collective Agreement and we must work to ensure that we maintain current benefits.

Gabriel Ryan

First and foremost, government is attempting to derail the collective bargaining process by creatively forging revenue deficits in a year when many agreements are up for renewal. As an association representing almost 6,000 teachers, the NLTA and its negotiating team must remain steadfast in presenting the will of teachers as we move forward. A number of years ago, a former director of ESD stated at a Board shutdown that learning diminishes when class size exceeds 22 students. It is a rarity today to see

classes of 22 students or less, so education is suffering. Teachers want and need more human, technological and curricular supports to meet the demands that are placed upon them. Further, we deserve to be fairly remunerated within any economic reality, but especially in an economy the Premier herself has told others is sizzling hot. Fairness and respect is as big a priority as anything else.

Sean Weir

For me, the key priority issues in this round of bargaining have not changed one iota. They remain those issues which our membership submitted to the Collective Bargaining Committee who prepared our opening package and, then, passed it on to our Negotiating Team. The priorities expressed by our membership were heard loud and clear by the elected/appointed union representatives and included:

- Leaves with Pay
- Workload
- Supervision of Students
- Hiring of Teachers
- Salaries and Allowances
- Pension Indexing
- Sick Leave
- Positions of Administrative Responsibility

My focus remains with each of these identified teacher issues. To abandon any of them, now, in the face of employer intimidation tactics, would not be in the best interests of teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. We must follow through with our identified priorities, or we would have to ask ourselves why we went through the process in the first place.

Jeanne Williams

NLTA presented an opening package to Government which addressed several key issues identified by teachers, not listed here in any particular order of importance:

- Non-discretionary Family Leave
- Re-instated Sick Leave Article as it is for teachers hired prior to September 2006
- Personal Leave Days
- Supervision of Students
- Hiring of Teachers
- Pension improvements
- Positions of Administrative Responsibility
- Salaries and Allowances

I believe the most important point we must keep in mind is that we have a Collective Agreement negotiated that is fair to all teachers.

The major concern for teachers is the perception that the employer proposes to eliminate severance, make pension reform and change hiring procedures.

Teachers are not keen on having to take job action, work to rule or eventually strike; however, it will depend on the continued demands by the employer. As teachers we cannot tolerate the stripping of the contract.



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

1. b) How far do you think teachers are willing to go to see these priorities addressed?

Bill Chaisson

How far teachers are willing to go depends upon what is on the negotiating table. There is a range of responses from doing nothing to initiating a job action. Teachers may be willing to sign a collective agreement which is status quo; however, if the employer is looking for major concessions, contract stripping and an agreement which reduces current benefits such as pensions, I believe teachers will take a stand and collectively take action whether that is work to rule, strike or some other form of job action. In the end, it is the teachers of this province who will determine the action to be taken and I am confident in both their collective wisdom and their resolve to get a fair and equitable collective agreement.

Derek Drover

See reply in 1 a).

Kevin Flynn

From the conversations that I've had with teachers over the past few months, many teachers feel that their rights are being stripped away to the very core. Numerous teachers are now considering leaving the profession of education because of the government's horrendous proposal. In my opinion, teachers are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that the government doesn't slash the current collective agreement. Teachers in our Association are cognizant of these issues and are willing to take a united stand. The outcome at the present time is simply unknown; however, if government is unwillingly to be reasonable, then I truly believe teachers will do whatever it takes to have their voice heard, even if that means potential job action.

Craig Hicks

Government's indication to tamper with severance and pensions has united our membership with a common goal to resolve these concessions and remove them from the negotiating table. I believe that the line has been drawn and teachers will take a firm stance against contract stripping and adhere to the legal avenues available to the NLTA.

Trent Langdon

Bottom line, this is a critical juncture for our Association with our current work conditions and future financial welfare at stake. This current round of negotiations has significant implications for all NLTA members and informed, strategic decision making cannot lose out to

complacency and ignorance when deciding upon potential job action.

Before NLTA members can make any collective decisions related to current negotiations, we will all need to evaluate the tangible impacts on our personal, individual experience and consider the direction provided by our Association. Once an offer is made, we must stay true to our beliefs as educators and hold strong to our professional standards. A united front can only be attained if teachers are kept 'in the know' and leadership provided by the NLTA.

I respect the approach of our negotiating team, believe in the power of unionism, and truly trust that NLTA members will move forward in solidarity.

Jean Murphy

Teachers are aware that this is going to be a tough round of negotiations. I believe it is too early to tell how far teachers are willing to go to address these priorities. We have an opening proposal from our employer that could warrant job action. But we must follow the process. We need to negotiate first. When the time arrives, I believe teachers will not stand for contract stripping.

Sandra Quigley

Teachers do not want a strike – that would be considered only as a last resort. Take time to negotiate and wait it out for a while. Teachers do not want to jeopardize extra-curricular offerings because that would diminish parental support. Work to rule regarding meetings, committees and administrative tasks is a definite possibility. A Political Action Campaign should be continued as needed. The "Now is Not the Time" campaign is a good start. It is important to work through the branches to encourage teachers to contact MHAs and make their views known.

Sherri Rose

I believe that teachers, under the leadership and direction of the NLTA will do what is necessary to see that our priorities are addressed. I believe we will work hard to protect current benefits and ensure that no toxic proposals are allowed to seep in. How far are we willing to go? At this point, it is really too early to predict how negotiations will play out, especially since the employer has yet to resume negotiations. Therefore, to say that we will take strike action or agree to work to rule or some other tactic is a bit premature. However, I do believe that we are strong and that we will stand up



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

for ourselves and future generations of teachers. I firmly believe that we will take action if and when necessary and am pleased with our recent ad campaign because now is most definitely not the time.

Gabriel Ryan

In the opening salvo fired across NLTA's bow by our current government during our recently opened contract negotiations, we were offered the ability to be the authors of our own demise by accepting what we all now call contract stripping. By its very nature, a union or an association is an organization that represents the best interests of its fee payers and through its negotiating team, advocates and agitates for better working conditions, better wages, properly-funded safety and resource regimes, as well as a collective voice that gives strength to the voices of those who feel weakest. Teachers are more resolved than I have ever seen them and I am certain we are all ready to stand together to say "NO" to a contract of deletion and particularly to protect our

futures by refusing to accept anything that ignores our pension contributions by reducing future entitlements.

Sean Weir

This is more a matter of a personal choice. I know how far I am willing to go to get what I want, but being an executive member requires the ability to listen to the voices of all teachers. I would never be so presumptuous as to assume the collective will of our members without directly asking for their input; we all know what can happen if we ass-u-me things. As a member of the Provincial Executive Council, I have learned to express my opinion while still supporting decisions contrary to my views. This is what I will do in this case; I will support whatever direction the majority of the teachers in this province wish to take once they have been asked.

Jeanne Williams

See Reply in 1 a).

2. The Department of Education's philosophy of inclusion is being implemented by school districts throughout the province. What are some of the key issues for teachers that arise from its implementation, and how do you think these can be addressed?

Bill Chaisson

Several issues have arisen from the implementation of the inclusion philosophy. In part, this is because there has not been a good understanding and common interpretation of what Inclusion is and what it looks like in schools.

Human and financial issues are a concern in some schools. Addressing this means providing adequate numbers of teachers to do the job and to resource this initiative properly. This means ongoing financial support after schools come off of the pilot phase.

Lack of preparation time to plan collaboratively once schools have come out of year one is an issue. The solution is guaranteed preparation time and an allotment of substitute time similar to what is given during the phase in period.

Ongoing in-service needs to be part of any initiative. Teachers need to be current in their practice and the only way to do this is to provide meaningful and practical in-service.

Derek Drover

While educators appreciate the philosophy of the inclusion model which values the learning of all students, to deliver the most appropriate and quality programming

as initially intended, further resources are needed. For students requiring additional supports, we must continue to lobby for additional educators to meet that need. Now is not the time for teacher cuts that would further restrict our efforts to meet the needs of all students. By focusing on the roles and critical importance of the members of the service delivery team requiring collaboration and time to meet the needs of all our children, the need for improved allocations of personnel such as IRTs, SLPs, guidance counselors, educational psychologists, and other itinerants become essential. Our proposals on class size and teacher allocations attempt to alleviate some of the systemic stress – particularly important considering the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)*.

Kevin Flynn

The implementation of inclusion is excellent in theory, however with inclusion comes many issues. One issue is that of the availability of qualified IRTs. It is difficult to recruit qualified IRTs, particularly in rural areas. With the implementation of inclusion, there are many occasions that the classroom teacher is left to their own devices to teach all the students in their class. This creates an enormous amount of strain and stress for the teacher to implement numerous diverse lesson plans to address



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

each student's needs and learning style. The key to addressing some of the issues of inclusion is to lower the student teacher ratio in classes which are comprised of students with IEPs and ISSPs. Another key ingredient to help combat the stress of inclusion for classroom teachers is to have more opportunities for classroom teachers and IRTs to co-teach with common planning periods built within the confines of the school day.

Craig Hicks

The inclusive philosophy promotes a collaborative approach for all educational stakeholders. The primary focus from this philosophy is on teaching strategies that are developed to meet the needs of all students regardless of their academic abilities. Since the controversial roll out of the inclusionary model, teachers have had the opportunity to raise numerous concerns. Two years ago the NLTA conducted a province wide initiative to gather information from teachers regarding the implementation of the "New" Inclusion Model. Some key issues identified were:

- The need to provide more time during the instructional day for collaboration between IRT and classroom teachers.
- More IRT positions and resources are required to successfully implement the inclusionary model.

In order to address the concerns associated with the inclusionary model the NLTA has provided a report that has been presented to the Department of Education's Student Support Services Division.

Trent Langdon

Though sound in philosophy, the implementation of the new inclusive model has resulted in great frustration for teachers, students, and parents. It has been a case of 'too much, too quickly', leading to a compromised service delivery model (with many interpretations from school to school). These sweeping changes, without ample preparation, training, and transitional time, have placed teachers in a particularly precarious position as they are challenged to meet the extensive learning needs of students in their care. Instructional Resource Teachers (IRTs) subsequently struggle with providing alternate programming and courses in a consistent manner with heavy caseloads.

To allow for a successful shift to the proposed service delivery model, ample planning time, accessible resources, and practical opportunities to create and implement co-teaching strategies are essential. Increased IRT allocation and additional student assistant time are vital to meet the many learning and behavioral needs that exist within the inclusive classroom.

Jean Murphy

According to the Department of Education website:

"In an inclusive school culture diversity is embraced, learning supports are available and properly utilized, and flexible learning experiences focus on the individual student. Real inclusion is about actions, not just words."

I believe that every child in Newfoundland and Labrador has the right to be educated with their peers. I believe in the philosophy of inclusion. It can work – with the right supports. Unfortunately, the right supports are not available in the majority of our schools. We do not have enough IRT support. We do not have enough common planning time for teachers. We have classroom teachers dealing with exceptionalities without any background or training. Teachers who are trying to implement the Model need direction. We also desperately need more Instructional Resource Teachers in the classroom to properly implement the Inclusion Model. We need action, not words.

Sandra Quigley

The current Teacher Allocation Model was implemented before Inclusion came on stream. Therefore, the formula for teacher allocation needs to be revisited to accommodate the needs of the inclusive classroom. Biggest issue – insufficient human resources. Close second – expectations on classroom teachers and IRTs. Teachers are now stretched in so many directions, they have difficulty serving the students who are far behind their classmates. Our teachers are doing a fabulous job with what is currently available, but collaboration, team-teaching and common assessment all add demands on a teacher's time at the expense of their personal and family time. Children with pervasive needs such as autism, hearing and visual impairment, FASD, etc. require teachers with specialized training. The allocation model has to be "needs based".

Sherri Rose

Inclusion has been the topic of conversation for quite some time. I feel that teachers support the philosophy of inclusion. It allows for greater teacher collaboration, planning and delivery of the curriculum. It also allows students with special needs to be less segregated from their peers. That being said, the issues are not with the philosophy, but with the implementation. The implementation process has not been without challenges. Although there are many things that can be discussed, I will focus on two key issues. One issue is human resources. Current staffing does not support the model and we do not have enough teachers to make inclusion work to its full potential. We desperately need increased



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

teacher allocations. A second key issue is resources. A wider variety of resources need to be readily available in order for teachers to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students.

Gabriel Ryan

Some of the key issues re Inclusion for teachers, and from what I've heard "from" teachers, is that our education system is woefully bereft of sufficient human resources to facilitate meaningful educational experiences for those who are most at-risk. We are told that we have a needs-based system, but as an Executive member for six years, I have been advised of too many cases where the support is not there for classroom teachers and IRTs are swamped with ever-increasing expectations. In fact, many of them are at the breaking point. Additionally, due to this lack of resourcing and the increased workloads of teachers, students of all abilities are getting less than they deserve. The theory of Inclusion is, and has always been, commendable and honourable, but in practice there are some serious inadequacies. Effective remediation can and will only occur when NLTA takes the lead.

Sean Weir

I must come right out and say that I am not against the idea of Inclusion, as I feel that all people have the right to be accepted for who they are, and should never feel inferior among their peers. In many of our schools, though, the current version of Inclusion is not working. Teachers are overwhelmed with the meetings and paperwork involved in the process and have only a vague understanding of the process. Schools lack the

proper allocation of teachers to successfully implement the current model, and the requirement of teachers to re-write/deliver specific curriculum outcomes to a plethora of learning styles, without significant training, is quite stressful. I would like to see the NLTA launch a publicity campaign highlighting the right of every student to receive a quality education and specifically state why this is not presently happening in many of our schools.

Jeanne Williams

The key issues for teachers with the latest Inclusion Policy being implemented throughout the province include: increased workload, need for the adequate resources, additional Instructional Resource Teachers, time for teachers to collaborate to prepare programming and professional development to make the model work.

Teachers are expected to work with students with exceptionalities in their classroom providing the services they require, while still covering the curriculum for all students. This concept of inclusion and differentiated instruction can work very effectively as the classroom teacher and the IRT work together as a team. More IRT teachers must be allocated and collaboration time provided if teachers are to provide the educational experience our students deserve.

To adequately deal with the issues surrounding inclusion requires resources, more teachers, preparation time, training and professional development. NLTA needs to continue to address this issue through collective bargaining, liaison with Department of Education and School Boards.

3. What would you do to ensure fair hiring practices for non-tenured teachers and to ensure that non-tenured teachers are able to have their issues addressed?

Bill Chaisson

We need to continue to work toward the elimination of the word "suitability" in Article 6 of our Collective Agreement. This word simply gives the employer too much latitude in the hiring of teachers. Replacing "suitability" with "capability" would help solve this issue.

As well, any teacher who has not been hired needs to be able to ask why and they need to be able to do so without fear of reprimand or reprisals. As an Association, we need to educate teachers on their rights and guarantee them that we will stand by them when they are asking the difficult questions. We need to alleviate fears around questioning hiring practices because doing so will empower teachers and help eliminate unreasonable fears. If unfair hiring practices are widespread or an ongoing issue, BES

needs to investigate the possibility of launching a policy grievance on behalf of those teachers.

Derek Drover

To ensure that all teachers, including non-tenured teachers, are subject to fair hiring practices, we must continue our determination to protect our collective agreement (CA) and seek improvements where needed. By achieving the necessary strengthening of Article 12, probationary teachers would have greater access to the grievance process. We must resist also any efforts by the employer to remove Article 31.16, which gives the teacher the right to present personal complaints to the Board or the Department. We must not permit the employer to weaken the grievance procedure by removing the Board Chairperson from Article 31. Replacing "suitability" with



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

“capability” in Article 6 in this round of negotiations would also hold the employer to a higher level of accountability. In short, we must strengthen the language of the CA where needed and ensure that avenues for all teachers to uphold their rights are not eliminated or weakened via contract stripping.

Kevin Flynn

Current hiring practices seem to vary from school district to school district. In some cases, this can result in significant challenges for qualified teachers who are looking to do what they do best – teach. Ensuring fair hiring practices based on the principles of fairness and transparency will ensure the students of this province have the most qualified teachers for the job. By putting in place a province wide hiring regulation, the school districts can ensure better hiring practices and expect better outcomes for the students of our province. I would lobby school districts to contact unsuccessful interviewees who request a feedback interview. In doing so, school districts would be requested to provide appropriate feedback to assist with the professional growth of the candidates. Doing this would help ensure the process of hiring each teacher is fair and transparent.

Craig Hicks

Regardless of hiring non-tenured or the reassignment of tenured teachers, it is paramount that our collective agreement is strictly followed. If for some reason a teacher feels that the collective agreement has been contravened during a hiring process, they should contact the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA. Furthermore, our opening proposals address employment issues in Articles 6 and 12 to ensure fair hiring practices are a focus during this round of negotiations.

Trent Langdon

Having been there ourselves, we are well aware of the needs of non-tenured teachers; that hiring procedures be conducted properly and that there be a mechanism to bring individual issues forward in a safe manner, without repercussion.

The NLTA holds the responsibility of advocating on behalf of all teachers by acting as a watchdog, representing the collective, and addressing individual issues as they arise; giving us ‘a voice’. These roles and support systems of our Association need to be actively communicated to non-tenured teachers and teachers need to remain informed on efforts by the NLTA to break down any inconsistencies that do occur.

These teachers make up a significant demographic of our Association and play key roles within each of our

schools. If elected, I will work to ensure that the channels for information sharing are open and that the vulnerabilities of non-tenured teachers remain at the Provincial Executive table.

Jean Murphy

Changing the word “suitability” to “capability” in Article 6 as put forth in our opening proposals will go a long way towards more fair hiring practices.

All teachers, but especially non-tenured, should be aware of their rights. It would benefit teachers to become involved at the local branch level by attending meetings or social events. Teachers can have issues brought to Joint Council by the Branch President. The School Board-Teacher Liaison Committee brings issues directly to School Board personnel from the teacher. We also have a very knowledgeable staff at the NLTA building that we can contact to discuss issues that concern us.

Sandra Quigley

Non-tenured teachers need a clause in the collective agreement which ensures they have recourse if they feel they are treated unfairly. As for hiring practices, the responsibility to fill positions remains with the school boards. That said, we could provide guidelines developed by our Association to School Boards. We could also ask that any of our members (i.e. administrators) who participate in the hiring process ensure their input is governed by those guidelines.

Sherri Rose

I would encourage non-tenured teachers and all teachers to get involved at the branch level by attending meetings and having issues raised at Joint Council. I would also encourage teachers to contact the staff at NLTA. They are just a phone call/email away and can address concerns and give advice. In light of the many frustrations that non-tenured teachers have, I think it is great to see that hiring is a priority in this round of bargaining. In our Collective Agreement, Article 6 deals with the employment of teachers. Our opening proposals include several proposed changes/additions that should help ensure that hiring practices are fairer. I know that our negotiating team will work hard to address hiring issues and I believe that we are headed in the right direction to make positive improvements in this area.

Gabriel Ryan

Too many times over the past ten years or so, I have heard non-tenured and substitute teachers bemoan, rightfully so, their lack of control or influence over their future career paths. Large numbers of teachers feel they



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

have little voice vis-à-vis their teachable areas and seek to be shown at least some semblance of respect in their daily professional lives. Nowhere is this sentiment more prevalent in our system than with non-tenured and substitute teachers. Our negotiated contract gives school districts the right to hire based on “suitability,” but I believe this needs to change to transcribed capability and experience. As a former substitute teacher I have experienced the frustration felt by those who hold no tenure. Since becoming involved in NLTA, I have consistently advocated for those who feel less empowered and I intend to do so for the rest of my career.

Sean Weir

I feel that the proper channels already exist within our Association to address this issue, if we are successful with getting the term “suitability” replaced with “capability” throughout Article 6 of our Collective Agreement. The problem, then, lies with educating our members (non-tenured teachers) of their rights. Years ago, in the St. John’s area, I was a victim of an unfair hiring practice, and what action did I take? Regretfully, nothing. I simply did not know my rights and never made any contact with the NLTA. Perhaps, the best course of action for our Association to take on this issue would be to inform all

of our non-tenured teachers of the contents of Article 6 in the Collective Agreement, and to encourage all members to contact Association staff if they feel that their rights have been violated.

Jeanne Williams

Hiring practices for teachers is a key issue in this current round of negotiations, both for the NLTA and the employer. At present, both sides are putting forward very different changes they would like to see in the filling of vacant teaching positions. The non-tenured teacher currently has some protection when positions are being filled. NLTA’s negotiating team are working to ensure the employer will recognize the benefit of agreeing to our opening proposals and the changes we believe will make the hiring process more effective and fair for all teachers. I am a member of that negotiating team and will continue to work for these improvements in our contract.

A teacher who feels they have not been treated fairly by the School Board during the hiring process should contact the NLTA staff of the Benefits and Economic Services Division to ensure the proper procedure has been followed and that their rights have not been violated.



Bill Chaisson



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Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

4. Given that there are recruitment issues for speech-language pathologists (SLPs), how would you lobby government to provide a bonus structure similar to other specialist's positions within the school system, as well as lobby for student SLP ratios as recommended by the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)?

Explanatory Note: Speech-Language Pathology positions are similar to Educational Psychologists positions in that they work on an itinerant basis providing assessment and consultation to student support service teams and families of students with speech and language difficulties. SLPs then provide consultation to IRT and classroom teachers regarding the strategies and goals outlined in the IEP and provide intervention for students diagnosed with a Speech or Language exceptionality. SLPs often do not have enough time to adequately provide testing and direct services to students due to high case loads. The CASPLA “recommends a caseload of between 31 and 40 students for those SLPs primarily seeing clients aged 6 and over. Caseload guidelines also with school-age children do so using several service models – usually a blend of direct one-on-one and consultative service, with some group or collaborative work. Adding to the need for flexibility is the fact that many SLPs working mainly with older children do so in a school setting and their duties include education, training and coaching of parents, teachers, and other individuals who are part of the implementation team. Caseloads for SLPs working mainly with older children are much higher than those of SLPs working with either children under six or adults”. (www.caslpa.ca/PDF/Caseload%20Guidelines%20report%20final%20SLP%20January%2030%202004.pdf).

Bill Chaisson

In our opening package we have proposed changes to Article 50 (Allowances) which would see a change to include SLPs in the bonus structure. If there is to be a bonus structure established for any group it must be negotiated at the bargaining table.

Salaries are one issue with recruitment; however, workload is equally or more important. If caseloads are a deterrent, salaries alone will not solve the recruitment issue. If school based SLPs are compensated at levels similar to other agencies and there is still a recruitment issue, caseloads need to be examined. The best way to ensure reasonable caseloads as recommended by CASLPA is within the collective agreement. We need to have caseloads capped and those caps need to be negotiated into an agreement so we do not have issues around interpretation and soft vs. hard caps as we have seen in the past.

Derek Drover

The recruitment/retention/adequate allocation of SLPs are a key component to the success of the new inclusion model of education; they are an essential resource and partner working closely with teachers and families to meet the needs of students. It must be made quite clear, by highlighting the myriad of invaluable services provided by SLPs, that an improved remuneration package is to be considered to address the recruitment issues. Our opening proposals attempt to address these issues by seeking a new Article 30.05 (b) (iv) to entrench a

student to teacher allocation ratio pertinent to SLPs as well as capping the number of direct contact students per position. Recommendations by the CASLPA would be a corner stone in our lobbying efforts. That SLPs must meet similar educational requirements to educational psychologists for designation and certification would favour a similar allowance as per Schedule C.

Kevin Flynn

It needs to be clearly communicated to government that SLPs need an adequate and a reasonable caseload that is enforced. In order to practice in the NL school system, SLPs require certification from CASLPA, along now with a provincial licensure. To keep their certification, SLPs have to obtain a minimum of 45 continuing education credits (CECS) EVERY THREE YEARS. This is a definite commitment and demand over the course of the SLPs career to stay on top of the latest research. While some time and financial support may be provided at times by some districts, in order to stay working, many SLPs have to do this during their own time using their own money. A bonus is a must to offset the expenses SLPs must endure, otherwise many SLPs will decide to leave the profession or practice elsewhere in the country.

Craig Hicks

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are an integral part of the specialized services that students can avail of within the education system. With the extensive training,



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

including a Master's degree, many potential candidates are enticed to pursue a career outside the educational field. For those who accept positions in the school system they are overwhelmed with unrealistic caseloads compounded with extensive travel. The best way to address the issues regarding SLP caseloads and a bonus structure is through the collective bargaining process. Currently, the NLTA's opening proposals to government do address these concerns. Article 30 references caseload maximums for SLPs and Article 50/Schedule C introduces an allowance formula for SLPs. It is in the hands of our collective bargaining team to ensure that these issues are addressed at the table.

Trent Langdon

Bonus structures, student-specialist ratios, and overall capabilities to effectively service caseloads are issues that frequently come to the forefront for specialists within the education system. The survey-based research conducted for CASLPA (2003) indicates a national trend that caseloads are unable to be effectively met by SLPs. Roles do vary according to the models utilized in the respective regions and additional job expectations are interfering with direct service to clients. Several items need to be considered when looking to advocate on behalf of our SLPs:

- (i) Knowledge of current recruitment statistics (NL) within each of the school districts
- (ii) Respective caseload experiences
- (iii) How the 'Inclusive Model' of service delivery has impacted support of students diagnosed with SL exceptionalities
- (iv) Regional disparities that exist within SLP roles
- (v) National standards for SLP bonuses

Once consultation with SLPs is conducted and this information attained, a concerted lobbying effort can take place.

Jean Murphy

As with program specialists, educational psychologists, and guidance counsellors, who all currently receive bonuses for their services, speech-language pathologists are integral members of the Special Services Support (SSS) teams at the schools they service. The inclusion of the speech-language pathology position in the bonus structure would be a positive step towards filling any replacement and vacant positions, and retaining those speech-language pathologists currently in the more remote/rural areas. The bonus would also improve the likelihood of attracting and retaining educational speech-language pathologists who will be needed to fill any new positions created.

Sandra Quigley

I would definitely lobby for SLP ratios which are in line with the CASLPA recommendations. I believe that a reasonable client caseload is very important to the quality of services provided and to the quality of life for the SLP. Bonuses should be in line with other similar professionals.

Sherri Rose

In our last round of negotiations, we were successful in obtaining an allowance for educational psychologists. Since SLPs must meet similar requirements, the argument for an allowance for SLPs is grounded in a similar philosophy. I would use these similarities as the foundation of my argument for a bonus structure for them. In our opening package, the proposed changes/additions to Article 50 and Schedule C would have a very positive impact on SLPs and would help address recruitment issues. As far as student SLP ratios are concerned, Article 30 looks at applying caseload maximums. I believe that we are making efforts to make significant gains for SLPs and should continue having open discussions with government. The work SLPs do is invaluable and like classroom teachers, their workload seems to increase all the time. Between assessment, servicing, and consultation with the school and the home, they are spread too thin.

Gabriel Ryan

There is no doubt in my mind that SLPs should receive bonuses akin to those recently gained by their Educational Psychologist counterparts. In fact, there is scholarship to support this contention. In May 2007, the Teacher Allocation Commission in their report *Education and Our Future: A Road Map to Innovation and Excellence*, offered that there exists a significant shortage of SLPs and those who are employed juggle a caseload that "has been stretched to an untenable level." It is time NLTA redoubled its efforts to have the findings of this report realized for this group. So, are SLPs specialists? Well, they work with students, teachers and parents to deliver, often develop, programs and they assist in developing alternate courses. They diagnose speech and language disorders, they use their own vehicles to visit schools where those untenable caseloads await, and they must achieve national clinical certification. Sounds specialist to me.

Sean Weir

I would like to see the Association president, our official spokesperson, take a more active role in making this issue, and others, known to the public. We all know that any lobby effort is more effective when there are more



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

voices repeating the same message. Therefore, I would ask that the president be more vocal with this and other Association priorities in the media, perhaps through open-line shows. Also, I feel that by meeting regularly with parent groups, such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, the needs of the students in our province, and, consequently, the needs of the Speech-Language Pathologists could be addressed.

Jeanne Williams

Speech-Language Pathologist allocation and bonus structure are included in the NLTA opening proposals for this current round of collective bargaining. This is the primary means by which we lobby the employer for improvements in the working conditions for teachers.

5. What role do you see NLTA playing with the changing structure of small schools and their dynamics (class composition, Service Delivery Model, lack of and, in some instances, no prep time, teacher workload, etc.)?

Bill Chaisson

The changing structure of small schools in this province has certainly created some challenges. The priorities outlined in our opening package are a significant step toward addressing the issues of class composition, preparation time, service delivery and workload. Success at the bargaining table would be a move in the right direction.

In addition, I believe we need to move to a needs based allocation which takes into account adequate preparation time and class composition. This would help alleviate some of the challenges being faced by small schools, whether they are in rural or more urban settings. Schools need to be staffed based not strictly upon numbers, but instead upon the needs of the school. NLTA needs to work both inside and outside the negotiating room to ensure adequate teachers are in place to offer programs while maintaining a reasonable workload for teachers in those schools.

Derek Drover

NLTA must continue to be a strong advocate for equity of student access to services. We must not waiver in articulating that an effective teacher allocation model must recognize the unique geographical realities of our province to permit teachers to effectively meet the needs of all students. Our opening proposals attempt to address many of these concerns by seeking to ensconce improved teacher allocations into the collective agreement, along with improved specialist allocations, support for on-line learning, guaranteed admin/prep time, and

In November 2006, NLTA's submission to the Teacher Allocation Review Commission included the recommendation to establish a new allowance structure for SLPs and that a caseload of 1:60 with a maximum of 40 direct-contact students per position. This submission was heard and included in the Commission's final recommendations. Government accepted and set items to be reviewed. In 2011 NLTA requested an update and were told the employer was consulting the Department of Health. We must ensure these are agenda items for liaison meetings with the Government.

As a member of the NLTA Negotiating Team I would continue to work to have both these issues included in our next Collective Agreement.

recognizing the demands on the teacher of meeting the needs of all students in the inclusive classroom – particularly students requiring accommodations, alternate programming, modified, prescribed or alternate courses. Public discourse by NLTA on such matters must include the curriculum overload placed on teachers in our smaller schools. For effective inclusive learning communities to fully flourish as initially envisioned, government must supply the resources to make this vision a reality.

Kevin Flynn

Teachers in rural areas are called upon to teach in multi-graded settings more and more. As such, they are expected to go above and beyond the call of duty to provide the necessary instruction in these situations. Sustaining the kind of energy and momentum needed to continue on this path for an extended period of time is likely to have a negative impact on already exhausted teachers. Many teachers find the stress and workload too overbearing and leave the profession altogether. If teachers in rural areas are to have more and more demands placed upon them, then success seems to hinge on additional support. The NLTA needs to lobby school districts with schools in rural areas to make modifications to existing programs that are geared to single-graded classrooms, training, and in-servicing for teachers at the university level.

Craig Hicks

Governments have long been challenged in trying to provide public services to small and isolated communities throughout the province. The most vulnerable



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

section of our population to feel the effects of inadequate services in rural communities is students in small schools. Insufficient teaching units, multi-age classes and impractical workload issues are synonymous with small schools. In many cases a teacher is responsible for the entire outcomes in the primary or elementary grades. Furthermore, principals are expected to teach full time with limited administration allocations. I feel that the NLTA must be the voice and advocate at every possible opportunity to government about the unrealistic workload issues that are associated with small schools. Our opening proposals do address workload issues and class size regarding multi-grade and multi-course limits.

Trent Langdon

The changing structure of small schools in Newfoundland and Labrador is reflective of the larger economic trends taking place within rural communities. In spite of the location of the school or its population, teachers are still required to meet curriculum outcomes, implement government initiatives, and contribute to the culture and daily functioning of their schools. With small staff sizes, it has necessitated teachers taking on additional roles and becoming increasingly creative to meet the academic, social, and behavioral needs of their students and school communities.

When advocating on behalf of teachers at the negotiating table or during the daily workings of the Association, the NLTA has a responsibility to be well informed of the regional disparities that may exist. It subsequently must work closely through the branch structure to consult with its members to determine the experience of teachers in small schools related to larger issues such as inclusion, workload, etc.

Jean Murphy

Teachers working in small schools face many challenges. Teachers are responsible for multi grades, have a huge course load, supervision and no prep time. We need to address these concerns through the negotiating team. Our opening proposals address prep time, workload and class composition. Staffing in small schools should be based on the best interests of the students, not the number of students. All children of Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of geographic location, deserve a good education. All teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador deserve good working conditions regardless of school size.

Sandra Quigley

Again, we have issues with the Teacher Allocation Formula. If it were truly needs based, teachers in small schools would have prep time. Small schools need dis-

tance education offerings to meet requirements where no qualified teacher is available. In some cases, this would mean upgrading computer resources to make these course offerings through CDLI more accessible. Technical support for small schools is also needed.

Flexibility in terms of curriculum delivery might go a long way to relieving demands on teachers. Allowing small schools to integrate more, satisfying outcomes across the curriculum and between grade levels is one way of dealing with excessive demands on teachers in small schools. NLTA would need to develop a position on this and lobby the Department of Education for its implementation.

Sherri Rose

Small schools face a host of issues that do not necessarily affect larger schools. In many small schools, teachers do not receive any prep time and must still perform supervision and carry out their regular daily duties which often includes multi-grade teaching. Teachers in small schools are often isolated from other colleagues/family and substitutes may not be readily available. These are just a few examples of the reality of small schools. Our opening package looks to implement mandatory prep time (15% of a 5 hour instructional day) for all teachers. This could be a very positive improvement for small school teachers. Although this only addresses one issue, it would undoubtedly be a huge gain. NLTA will continue to discuss this and other issues with the employer and work for improvements for the teachers and students in these schools.

Gabriel Ryan

By contract, every single teacher in this province is entitled to 40 minutes uninterrupted for lunch. Teachers in small schools, especially in Primary/Elementary schools, receive no such quarter. They are in class or on duty the lion's share of the time. As well, High School students in K-12 schools often do not have a teacher to present prerequisite courses for certain post-secondary programmes, so they must do courses through CDLI. With over 200 communities without broadband access in this province, this creates an inequity for rural children in particular as well as challenges for teachers attempting to submit reports online. Administrators wear many hats, teaching and carrying out administrative duties and supervision. If kids in a rural school travel to a larger centre to experience educational opportunities outside the classroom, cost is a prohibitive factor. NLTA needs to lobby harder to get small school and rural concerns addressed.

Sean Weir

I would like to see the Association lobby government



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

and educate the general public about the challenges of: a) delivering our current provincial curriculum in a multi-grade setting; b) implementing inclusionary practices; c) offering extra-curricular programming; and d) having the same school-based committees as larger schools, in small schools. There never seems to be enough time in the day to perform all of the duties required in our jobs. (Especially, given the fact that there is usually minimal preparation time.) Perhaps, the NLTA could arrange for a “Bring Your MHA to School Day,” so these issues could be witnessed first-hand by our elected representatives in the House of Assembly. Also, it may be an idea for the Association to lobby for the creation of a Small Schools’ Curriculum for our teachers to follow as it has become increasingly difficult to follow the provincial curriculum in a multi-grade setting.

Jeanne Williams

Small schools are challenged to provide a full K-12 program for a fair educational opportunity for their students. Additional funding is needed to improve allocation of teachers to small schools. A minimum of 0.5 administration and an increased allocation for the multi-graded classroom is a necessity for every school. With staffing allocation so limited for small schools, preparation time is critical. These are issues currently being addressed in this round of collective bargaining.

Small schools (fewer than 100 students) made up 20% of the schools in the province in 2011-12. Small school issues are therefore big issues requiring the NLTA’s continued attention.

Our Association must ensure that workload is manageable and supports are in place so that teachers are able to do their job effectively and professionally.

6. What role do you see the NLTA playing in light of recent decisions by school boards to close small schools in rural communities?

Bill Chaisson

Any role we play must occur at the Provincial level. Individual teachers need to be cautious about voicing opinions which can be viewed as undermining the authority of their employer. If NLTA is to play a role, I would see it as one of advocating for smaller schools when appropriate, partnering with other groups and explaining the value of a particular school to the educational needs and survival of a community. As well, there may be a role in partnering with other groups to highlight the importance of schools as agents of both social and economic change. If the government is committed to the survival and prosperity of rural Newfoundland, they need to remember that schools will play an important role in any revival and schools must be seen as an investment in our people and our communities.

Derek Drover

As an Association of professional educators, many of whom are parents of children in the K-12 system, I believe that the NLTA must be cognizant of its importance in expressing concerns over the closure of schools in our province. These schools are typically active, close-knit, vibrant, and viable learning communities. With government still touting a growing economy in the long term, the NLTA can be an effective partner with parents in advocating for rural schools – the heart of these communities. Supporting our rural schools is, as are all schools, an investment in our children, our communities, our province, our future! However, in the event a school

does close, teachers should be informed of the reassignment process and their rights under the collective agreement with the active engagement of the NLTA.

Kevin Flynn

The NLTA needs to lobby the school districts for rural schools to remain open. These small schools are the heart and soul of their respective towns. The NLTA must communicate to the government that a tremendous amount of research states that achievement levels of small schools consistently exceed that of larger schools. Studies also reveal that student behavior is better, thus enhancing the learning environment. A number of reasons for the success of smaller schools are: less likely for students to be overlooked in small or isolated schools; participation in clubs is more likely; teams and student government is adequate for the numbers; and students in smaller schools come to know and care about others to a greater degree than in large schools. Furthermore, the inclusive environment created by smaller schools is more flexible than in larger schools and the teaching methods are more arbitrary.

Craig Hicks

The closing of a community school can certainly be viewed as another nail in a town’s coffin. It certainly ignites a community’s primal instinct to protect their children. Often it is the parents that take the leadership role in the campaign to reverse any decisions that would see the closure of their child’s school. It is common that such a campaign is done in the eyes of the public, media and community venues. The role the NLTA can take in



Bill Chaisson



Derek Drover



Kevin Flynn



Craig Hicks



Trent Langdon



Jean Murphy



Sandra Quigley



Sherri Rose



Gabriel Ryan



Sean Weir



Jeanne Williams

such a controversial issue is to ensure that in the result of school closures, affected teachers will be reassigned in accordance with the collective agreement. The fundamental cornerstone of the NLTA is to protect and ensure the well-being of the membership, especially those that may be disadvantaged through school closures.

Trent Langdon

Having been a student and a teacher within rural school environments, I have experienced first-hand the importance of the school to the heart and livelihood of the community. Teachers are equally important to their respective communities either having chosen to make their careers there or living (or growing up) within those same communities.

When deliberations are taking place regarding school closure for a particular school, teacher perspectives are crucial to the process. As an advocate for teachers, our Association needs to be included if the rights of teachers are being infringed upon or decisions are in direct contravention of the collective agreement. Teachers have a responsibility to include the Association at such a point. On a larger scale, it is well known that the NLTA continues to lobby government as it pertains to teacher allocation and teacher well-being. As a result, school closures are undoubtedly closely monitored.

Jean Murphy

It is a fact of life that many rural communities are struggling to survive since the decline of the fishery and outmigration. Student enrollment has dropped dramatically in some areas resulting in school closures. With school closure comes teacher reassignment. I believe it is the role of the NLTA to be supportive of our colleagues facing redundancy by ensuring the collective agreement is followed.

Sandra Quigley

School Boards will continue to close small schools unless communities reject this practice. They are operating on a budget and as they look for economies, closing schools seems economical. But, they have to be cognizant of more than just fiscal considerations. Take into account “dollars and sense!” What is an acceptable amount of time for children to spend on a school bus without bathroom facilities or seatbelts? At what age should we be ready to accept shipping our children to “not so nearby” communities? What are the conditions of the roads these children would have to travel? As educators in our communities, we need to partner with parents and community leaders to scrutinize this practice. Where school closure is not in the best interest of children, teachers or the community, NLTA should consider lending its voice to discussions surrounding such closures.

Sherri Rose

As educators, we want what is best for our teachers and our students. We want students to receive the best education possible, whether that is in a small, rural school or a large, urban center. It is unfortunate that small schools in

rural communities continue to close, but it is a trend in NL that is seen across many disciplines. When schools close, the NLTA will work to ensure that the parameters set out in the Collective Agreement as it pertains to such things as redundancies, layoffs and reassignments are adhered to. The NLTA will offer assistance and advice to help make the transition as easy and smooth as possible. They will also work to ensure that the move is in the best interest of all. Bigger is not always better, but sometimes change can be a positive thing.

Gabriel Ryan

There is a propensity, both in big business and in governance, that bigger is better, that protection of the bottom line, money, supercedes logical and proximal access to progressive education. Too many rural schools, facing a population decline of the communities that support them, have been left to their own devices, supported by a small group of caring and concerned parents, teachers and community leaders. I took the opportunity last fall to attend and monitor meetings at Swift Current Academy during the proposed school closure discussions. I thought at the time, and I maintain right now, that as an Association that represents front line providers of education, NLTA should be a strong voice in the face of such proposed changes. Travelling to distant larger buildings is no solution for our youth. In fact, saving the small school is vitally important to saving our rural communities and our culture.

Sean Weir

I am not sure what role, if any, the NLTA has in lobbying to keep small schools open, even though I personally feel that every child should be educated as close as possible to their home. (It may be more of a school council issue.) According to our mandate, “*We dedicate ourselves to the professional excellence and personal well-being of teachers, through support, advocacy, educational leadership and the development and delivery of outstanding programs and services.*” (NLTA website) For me, this is a government/community decision and, in reality, once the teachers have been given their new assignments, we should ensure that the Collective Agreement has been upheld in the transition, and then progress from there according to our mandate.

Jeanne Williams

The primary role of the NLTA in the decision of a school board to close small schools in rural communities is to support the teachers in the schools slated for closure. The NLTA exists to ensure the provisions of the Collective Agreement protecting teachers in this situation are strictly adhered to. Therefore, teachers must be encouraged to contact the NLTA staff as soon as they become aware of the plans for closure of their school.

The role of the NLTA has to be to protect the rights of teachers whose employment status changes. It exists to prevent or mitigate any potentially negative consequences.



2013