

# Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

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# Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

(Note: Edited only for typographical errors.)

## 1. If elected to Provincial Executive, what are two priority issues for teachers that you would attempt to address?

### Bill Chaisson

First, workload is a major issue for all of us. New initiatives which are not well resourced and downloading are negatively impacting upon the work-life balance of all teachers. Our brief on the budget recommends the addition of 150 additional teaching units and that administrative units be returned to the 2012 level. As an Association, we need to continue to lobby government for the supports we need to do our job well while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Second, teacher stress is at an all time high. This is directly linked to the work-life imbalance we all feel. We need only to look at the causes of LTD and the drugs used in our health plan to realize that we need to begin a conversation about mental health and to treat it the same way we treat physical well being.

### Wallace Childs

I believe two of the biggest priority issues we have to tackle as an Association are closely related: workload, and teacher morale. The demands on teachers with regards to workload keep on coming. More than ever we are seeing our workloads increasing, while issues like guaranteed prep time are not being directly addressed. And more than ever we are being called on to solve society's problems, such as mental health issues, healthy living and obesity, and lack of motivation among students, but to name a few. All of this is directly related to some of the lowest teacher morale that has been witnessed in recent years. With changes coming to pensions, teachers may have to look at working longer and paying in more to guarantee they have a pension when they want to retire.

### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador there are many issues facing teachers each and every day as they go about their daily work. If I were elected to the Provincial Executive two priority issues that I would attempt to address are: (1) the most effective way to implement Technology Initiatives in the educational setting; and (2) adequate/proper support in the classroom to address the diverse needs of our ever changing student population, including mental health concerns.

### Derek Drover

While there is no shortage of priorities for your Provincial Executive to address, beginning preparations for the next round of negotiations is vital. While negotiated improvements to Article 18.03, Article 5, Article 30.02, and Article 29.06 among others have strengthened our collective agreement, I believe that lobbying on behalf of teachers never ends. Class size matters and we must send a clear message that any anticipated reductions in teacher allocations, because of provincial budgetary restraints,

are unacceptable. As VOCM reported February 27, economist Wade Locke "encourages the province to not let short-term problems dictate the long-term strategy." Education is too important to be driven by erratic market fluctuations and political myopia. An unrelenting focus addressing workload issues and strengthening our collective agreement, coupled with attaining a reasonable and acceptable long-term pension solution within a sustainable fiscal framework for both current and future generations of educators, are essential.

### Kevin Flynn

One issue that needs to be addressed by the Provincial Executive is the substantial loss of control due to societal changes which have elevated the rights of all educational stakeholders beyond the educators themselves. Adverse working conditions like disruptive students and compromised professional autonomy have created negativity, apathy and increased stress. As a result, more and more teachers are availing of long-term disability and this problem must be resolved.

A second issue that needs to be on the agenda for the next Provincial Executive is the quality of work life of teachers. More and more, the expectations placed on teachers are totally unrealistic and are unable to be fulfilled. In a collective voice, the Association must say no to this and strive to improve the work life of teachers to a point where educators can teach with self-respect and dignity.

### Craig Hicks

The two issues that I am committed to address as a Provincial Executive Member are our pension issue and the mental health and well-being of teachers. Concerns with the uncertainty of our pension plan are without a doubt an important issue that is currently facing teachers. I am committed to act responsibly to ensure that teachers who want to retire can do so with dignity and maintain the lifestyle that they anticipated when their career began. The mental health and well-being of teachers has been silenced too long by the lack of understanding and the cultural stigma associated with these conditions. I will bring this growing issue to the Provincial Executive table and take a proactive stance against harassment in our workplace. Teachers must feel supported and safe in their workplace; therefore, the cultural barriers around mental illness must be replaced with awareness that ensures teachers receive the appropriate services required.

### Trent Langdon

High priority issues for teachers are i.) workload and ii.) the impacts of the inclusionary model upon our professional work experience.

A significant portion of the workload issue lies within the

shortcomings of the Assessment & Evaluation Policy and our responsibilities within the same. We require viable approaches that will bring autonomy back to the teacher, enabling them to maintain/manage personal workloads.

The demographics of our classrooms have become increasingly diverse and demanding. With mental health needs, pervasive behavioral concerns, multiple exceptionalities, a comprehensive service delivery model, and parent communications, management of the classroom has forced instruction to be majorly compromised. Related issues of duty schedules, committee work, data collection procedures, and lack of preparation time, continue to saturate the teacher's role and bring heightened stress to the profession.

I have regularly brought these items forward and will continue to advocate for resources and protection of our role.

### **Donna Reddick**

It is my belief that the two priority issues for Provincial Executive are teacher workload and mental health and wellness.

Government policies, greater accountability, class size, and the introduction of the inclusive education model have all increased teacher workload and limited our ability to be effective in the classroom. Teachers find it increasingly more difficult to find a work/life balance and we are seeing increased levels of teacher burnout, stress, and job dissatisfaction. For example, recent findings show that 53% of teachers on the LTD program are there for mental health and stress related illness.

Our Association needs to impress upon government that teacher stress is a major health concern and steps need to be taken to address it. We must rally government for reductions in class size, adequate resources to support the inclusive model of education and professional development. We need to bring workload issues and their impact on a teacher's mental health to the forefront.

### **Sherri Rose**

I believe that workload has to be addressed. I often hear teachers expressing concerns over their workload. The day to day expectations combined with countless hours spent planning, photocopying and correcting, is definitely taking its toll and something has to change. It seems that new things get added to our plates every year, yet nothing gets removed. A second priority is to continue to encourage the NLESD to consolidate its policies, especially the assessment, evaluation and reporting policy. There is a lot of confusion and frustration surrounding it. It is vital that the NLTA and our teachers are actively involved in the development of this policy. Ultimately, teachers need to be able to use their professional judgment when assessing and evaluating and they need to have a great deal of autonomy with regards to student accountability. Hopefully, the revamping of this policy may help lighten the workload of teachers.

### **Gabe Ryan**

After almost 15 years of attending Joint Councils, then BGMs, I am convinced that teachers are exhausted by bureaucratic minutia that acts not as a complement to the education of our students, but as a barrier that lifts professional judgment from teachers and creates frustration throughout our membership. It

seems that policies are divined to push students through their school years while devolving standards are inextricably linked to budget shortfalls that render human resources lacking. Our working conditions have become more challenging and, in some cases, untenable. We must work steadfastly to reverse this trend. We deserve better and so do our students.

We need to ensure that all of our members have their fingers on the pulse of those issues that directly affect us. From reasonable remuneration, to pensions, to wellness, to knowledge of our rights and of NLTA services, an informed membership is a healthy membership.

### **Colin Short**

If I am elected to NLTA Provincial Executive, two of the first priority issues I would attempt to address would be (1) teacher allocations and (2) pensions. The current allocations of teaching units in our schools are inadequate. Teachers in urban schools have large classes and find it difficult to deliver their programs and provide support to their students. Teachers in our rural schools have larger course loads and have multi-grade and multi-age settings to address, and both groups do not have sufficient preparation time to plan, assess and collaborate.

The unfunded liability in the Teachers' Pension Plan has to be addressed now. Our teachers must have a sustainable plan in place that will support them when they conclude their careers. Teachers must know what their Pension Plan will look like going forward to be able to plan for their futures.

### **Sean Weir**

If elected to Provincial Executive, two issues that I would attempt to address are teacher workload and teacher wellness. Having served as a trustee for the past four years with the NLTA Group Insurance Program, I have seen some rather disturbing trends in the Long-Term Disability claims experience of our members. Mental-nervous disorders have become the number one cause of teachers' inability to work. The claims experience also shows that our lesser-experienced members are having to avail of LTD insurance at an alarming rate. Not so coincidentally, over the past few years, the demands on teachers' time have increased with new curricula, technology integration, PBS initiatives, anti-bullying strategies, technology education modules, and inclusionary teaching methodologies while there has been no increase in, or guarantee of, preparation time to ready ourselves for the daily rigors of today's classrooms. A failure to address these issues would be an injustice to our members.

### **Jeanne Williams**

Negotiations will be a number one priority for the newly elected Provincial Executive. We are currently in discussions regarding the Pensions. These discussions must result in a negotiated settlement for a long-term solution to the unfunded liability of the Teachers' Pension Plan. As well, our current Collective Agreement will expire in August of 2016. The new executive will be tasked with the responsibility for building opening proposals for our next round of negotiations and negotiating a new Collective Agreement. We must incorporate the changes that will adequately address the issues and concerns of our members.

Another priority will be to develop a long-term communication strategy for the Association. This communication strategy should include:

- Communication to members, from members and among members.

## 2. The NLTA is committed to both professional development/promotion of education and to the welfare of teachers. What are your views on the responsibility of Provincial Executive members and the Association to promote:

- a) professional development and education, and
- b) teacher welfare?

### Bill Chaisson

The NLTA was founded on two pillars: Teacher Welfare and Professional Development. We need to treat both as equal building blocks.

Executive must promote meaningful Professional Development and we need to educate all members on the gains we made in securing one day for teacher-driven Professional Development. I believe the employer needs to partner with the NLTA to offer Professional Development and we need to be involved in setting the agenda.

On Teacher Welfare, we need to educate our members on the Collective Agreement. While all members have a copy, far too many are not aware of the rights which are protected in the agreement. We need to encourage them to call the NLTA when an issue arises and we need to reassure them that the Association will support them when they raise a concern.

### Wallace Childs

#### (a) Professional Development and Education

Professional Development is great, but teachers are tired. They just want to go in their classrooms and teach. As an Association, we need to work with the Department of Education and the school districts to re-engage teachers in professional development and make it more meaningful to them. Professional development is about collaboration, and teachers want time to collaborate. This coming at a time when it appears more and more PD is being driven online. As an Association, we need to promote increased educational opportunities to our members. All members are aware that learning is always taking place, and that there are different ways of doing things being presented all the time.

#### (b) Teacher Welfare

Presently I feel teacher welfare is one of the greatest concerns that our Association needs to tackle. We are always talking about the mental health of our students, but what about ourselves? How can we possibly help our students when we are struggling as teachers to cope with the stresses added daily to an already stressful career? As an Association, we have to promote what we already are doing for our members (such as the EAP Program) but also find other ways to prevent burnout from happening. It is great we now have three days guaranteed Family Leave time to use when needed, so this helps.

- Encourage the membership to become more active in the Association by providing opportunity for more direct involvement in our organization, forums and committees.
- Public perspective of what teachers do.

### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

I feel that that the Provincial Executive and the NLTA have very important roles to fulfill when promoting professional development, education and teacher welfare to all teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is important that the Provincial Executive and the NLTA continue researching, reviewing and implementing new and improved ways to enhance teacher welfare on a continuous basis. I believe this has been done, to a degree, through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This has to be communicated more effectively to our membership. It would be of great benefit if more sessions were offered throughout the school year to school staffs, such as promoting workplace balance, ergonomics, the changing workplace and stress management.

New and exciting ways of teaching are always emerging in our ever-changing world. Professional Development can and will keep us on the cutting edge of how to instill the love of learning to the students in this province. It is important for programs such as CONTACT to continue and to be available to more of our membership.

By providing meaningful Professional Development teachers ultimately become more effective in the classroom. If we use the best educational practices available to us, in the long term our students learn at the highest level possible.

### Derek Drover

NLTA's mission statement delineates its responsibility to teacher PD/education and welfare – "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." Our statement must consistently drive decision making to represent all teachers to the best of our ability. While appropriately furthering financial information sessions, wellness workshops, and beginning teacher conferences, Executive must continue advocating for adequate resources/supports, timely and meaningful PD, and sufficient allocations to alleviate elevated demands/stresses placed on teachers. Provincial SCS policy states, "A safe, caring and inclusive school is a necessary condition for student success. Students cannot be expected to reach their potential in an environment where they feel insecure, intimidated or excluded" (p.3). Teachers make schools successful! Teaching conditions

are students' learning conditions; to build collaborative, supportive, inclusive environments, the needs of teachers must also be of paramount consideration.

### **Kevin Flynn**

Aside from NLTA sponsored professional development and education opportunities there have been few district opportunities for teachers to remain current or to grow professionally. New programs are introduced with little or no inservicing. This increases teacher workload, stress and compromises the quality of learning for students. The Provincial Executive must put more ownership on government and the district to offer adequate and timely professional development.

With the increasing prevalence in mental health concerns within the membership, it is of paramount importance the Provincial Executive and the Association continue to focus on teacher welfare. Advertising the services of the Employee Assistance Program and reaching out to the membership will help ensure teachers are well informed and better prepared to address demands of work life. It is important that the concerns of teachers are addressed to improve the quality of school life for both teachers and students.

### **Craig Hicks**

I feel that the professional development arm of our Association has the ability to meet the needs of a large portion of the membership. Special Interest Councils provide teachers with the opportunities to self-direct professional development as they choose. Our Association and Provincial Executive should take a lead role in encouraging collaboration between the major stakeholders in education which includes: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Newfoundland and Labrador English/French School Districts and Department of Education. These agencies need to collectively develop a common annual approach in delivering professional development to teachers. The teacher welfare arm of our Association is the union aspect of the NLTA and can be viewed as the safety net which provides the added security for teachers. With the "right to work" legislation in the United States accompanied with Federal Bills C-525 and C-377 it is paramount that we ensure our members are protected from any attempts to erode these founding pillars.

### **Trent Langdon**

It is vital for us to espouse that professional development, education, and teacher welfare are ultimately the responsibilities of the employer. By keeping this principle at the forefront, we can ensure that our efforts remain well defined and directed at the primary source. We are, however, quite cognizant that maintaining control of our own individual and professional needs is essential.

Our Association continually demonstrates its effectiveness as a watchdog, critic, and advocate for teachers. Professional teacher services (e.g. financial preparedness), 'current' professional development and advocacy (e.g. Special Interest Councils), and education-based initiatives have further solidified the influence of our Association. This has become particularly important as we address the challenges of amalgamation into the NL English School District.

It is essential that your President, Vice-President, and Provincial Executive be visible and accessible, playing active roles within the internal workings of the NLTA, as well as on the public front.

### **Donna Reddick**

Professional Development and Teacher Welfare need to be a top priority for the NLTA. In terms of Professional Development, support from the Department is limited. As the province's professional association for teachers, it is up to the NLTA to provide access to additional curriculum support, particularly around issues of equity, social justice, LGBTQ, and bullying. The Executive also needs to encourage all teachers to avail of the one teacher-driven PD day that was recently negotiated.

With respect to teacher welfare, the NLTA has done a good job promoting and developing programs such as the EAP, the beginning teacher initiative, financial wellness sessions, teacher rights, and CONTACT. However, communication is key; we need to communicate more effectively with members in terms of our services. We have a lot to offer to our members above and beyond collective bargaining and disciplinary hearings!

### **Sherri Rose**

I believe our Mission Statement sums it up quite nicely. "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." With regards to PD and education, as Executive members, we need to maintain close contact with our branches so that they are aware of PD opportunities like DSS and CONTACT. Where possible, Executive members should attend these events and participate in them alongside our branches so that we are as knowledgeable as possible. The Association does an excellent job not only promoting and advocating these opportunities, but also delivering them and should continue to do so.

With regards to teacher welfare, we need to continue to promote our exceptional EAP program and make sure our members are aware of all it has to offer from consultation and intervention to prevention. We need to encourage our members to reach out to our EAP staff to receive whatever support they need and to remind them that it is both private and confidential. The association has supports in place and executive needs to advocate these programs and services every chance we get.

### **Gabe Ryan**

It should come as no surprise that I am a firm believer and a staunch supporter of unionism and of working together to get things done. Figuratively, at least, it is in my DNA. It is incumbent on all of us who hold or seek positions on your Provincial Executive to promote meaningful professional development and education. Article 28 of our Collective Agreement provides new rights concerning teacher-driven PD. If there is one sentiment I have heard over the years, it is frustration over lack of same... remember "Twenty-First Century Learning?" It is our right to have this PD, so let's seek it!

The NLTA puts a great deal of effort into teacher wellness, providing many programs and services. In reality, more teachers

are availing of EAP and mental health interventions and this trend is curving upward. As a member of Provincial Executive, I frequently provide the proper contact information for colleagues.

### **Colin Short**

Our founders in 1890 had two goals when our Association was created: Professional Development and Teacher Welfare.

Provincial Executive must continue to promote professional development for our teachers. I do not feel that data analysis, school development and new course implementation are the best use of teachers' professional development days. We must continue to press for meaningful professional development; the one day secured in the most recent round of negotiations was a good start. Our Association is equipped to offer sessions that teachers want and need to help them grow and hone their skills.

Teacher welfare is a growing concern. Teacher workload and stress are important issues. There are too many teachers on long-term disability, off on paid and unpaid leave. Our teachers need healthy work places and our Association must partner with our employer to hold wellness sessions to ensure that teachers are healthy and happy.

### **Sean Weir**

This question truly gets to the mission statement of the NLTA and the dual role of professional organization and labour union which it tries to fulfill. Personally, I see a link between the two. As a professional organization of teachers, we have a responsibility to our members to keep them abreast of any new advancements

in pedagogy, technology, or classroom management techniques (to name a few). I fully support the work of the PD arm of the Association, and strongly encourage our members to avail of its expertise. I have always been a strong advocate for teacher welfare issues and believe that a properly trained teacher will be a happy teacher. That being said, I am not so naïve to think that all teacher welfare issues can be addressed through PD. Some can only be addressed through collective bargaining, grievance procedures, or School Board- Teacher Liaison Committees.

### **Jeanne Williams**

Executive members are obligated to promote Association programs and services. These Executive members should be encouraged to visit their assigned Branches as well as the schools in these Branches. Each visit is an opportunity to chat with teachers. I would like to see Executive members being invited to address staff meetings on NLTA issues, especially encouraging discussions on sections of the Collective Agreement. This would also be an opportunity to promote the Association programs and services such as Professional Development, Employee Assistance Program and the various areas related to teacher welfare.

The EAP program promotes prevention and intervention as very important components of the services that teachers need. It is only through promotion of this program that members will become aware of its value.

The more we involve members in such debate and discussions, the stronger our Association will become.

## **3. Do you believe membership engagement is a concern within the NLTA and, if so, how would you, as a member of the 2015-17 Provincial Executive, attempt to address this concern?**

### **Bill Chaisson**

Membership engagement is difficult to define as it has many layers and looks different to each individual teacher. For some, engagement maybe reading a Bulletin article, for others, it may be SIC or Branch involvement. Direct communication with teachers has very much replaced the Branch meetings.

We do know that when called upon, teachers will actively engage. This was clear when teachers were asked to write their MHA regarding stalled negotiations. The key here is that they were asked.

Engagement is always a concern. I am suggesting the following to help increase teacher engagement:

- (a) A series of town hall forums with the President, Staff and Executive member. I believe an open discussion will engage teachers and promote the Association.
- (b) We need to offer some training to our Branch Presidents at Joint Council on how to engage teachers in their Branches.
- (c) Define what engagement means in 2015.

### **Wallace Childs**

All organizations are facing membership engagement issues. There is less and less commitment from teachers to get involved

in their organization. People are busy, and people are tired. Even social functions for members are not as well attended as they once were. As an organization, we need to do a better job of promoting our Association. Perhaps a video campaign online at our website showing the benefits of becoming involved. A key to anything we do to improve this issue must first and foremost get our new teachers involved. Our Association is getting older and we need fresh blood and fresh ideas. Perhaps another look at what we can do to promote our organization to the Education Faculty could be one approach.

### **Maureen Doyle-Gillingham**

I truly believe that membership engagement is a concern with the NLTA. In order to address this problem of membership engagement I feel the Provincial Executive and the NLTA has to take a more proactive approach to promote what the NLTA really stands for. One reason for disengagement is that teachers are pressured for time. Last year, when needed, social media was used to call the membership to action. This campaign was quite successful!

Teachers have also communicated that distance, work/home life balance and finances are some of the other factors which have prevented them from being involved. Incorporating meeting times into the workday, flexibility for teachers to travel on NLTA

business at the branch level, offering travel reimbursement and the use of technology are some ways to creatively engage people.

The NLTA and the School Districts also need to create a process whereby representatives of the NLTA would be a part of school or district-based shut down days.

### **Derek Drover**

The NLTA has a storied history of advocating for public education – to better serve the needs of our teachers. Teachers have always answered the call throughout the years as exemplified by our most recent successful lobbying effort to force government to return to the negotiating table. However, we must adapt our conceptualization of membership engagement to reflect the current realities of teachers’ personal and professional lives. Teachers are busy; their jobs are demanding! For sustained engagement to occur, it must originate from the needs of the membership. As a member of the NLTA’s Membership Engagement Committee, I can say that process has begun as teachers from across the province provided invaluable feedback through our extensive membership engagement survey. The NLTA exists to serve the teachers of this province and the Membership Engagement Committee/survey are the first steps towards developing a membership-driven strategic plan to better meet the needs of our members.

### **Kevin Flynn**

Membership engagement is a concern within the Association. Low membership engagement can be attributed to the heavy workload of teachers. Many teachers feel so overwhelmed and burdened with the daily stressors of surviving that they are simply too busy to become involved with NLTA activities. However, with that being said, over the past few years engagement has been improving. For instance, membership engagement was quite strong when the Association was encouraged to write their local MHA during the past contract negotiations.

In terms of enhancing membership engagement, the role of the Provincial Executive is to provide clear and consistent communication to and from the membership. The Provincial Executive can only speak for members when specific needs and desires are identified by the membership. This communication will help solve members’ issues and strengthen both engagement and solidarity within the Association.

### **Craig Hicks**

I do have concerns with membership engagement; it crosses all age groups of our membership and has become a topic of discussion not only at branch meetings, but also at the Provincial Executive table. The Strategic Plan for Membership Engagement is a priority for the NLTA. There is currently an Ad Hoc Committee on Membership Engagement that is exploring the concerns around this issue. The findings will be reported at the end of the Ad Hoc Committee’s mandate accompanied with any recommendations that would address membership engagement. As a member of the 2015-17 Provincial Executive I would be committed to ensure that a multi-year plan is implemented in order to address this concern.

### **Trent Langdon**

I strongly believe that ‘membership engagement’ is best defined as our ‘connectedness’ and ‘identification’ with our Association. With this definition in mind, there is work to be done.

The NLTA has taken valuable steps in this regard through its IT Strategic Plan, the development of an updated Communications Strategy, and the establishment of a Membership Engagement Committee. Over the past year, I have valued being Chair of this committee and see great opportunity as we actively gather data, explore the work in other jurisdictions, invest in our branches, and establish creative approaches.

Through the years, our members have benefitted from the services and activities of our Association; however, intentional efforts have to be made to reduce the generational and geographical gap that exists between our members. The NLTA is not simply 3 Kenmount Road. It is creating a sense of identity throughout the province, sharing a common voice.

### **Donna Reddick**

There is no doubt that membership engagement is a very real concern for the NLTA. We need to make the membership more aware of the relevancy of the NLTA – it allows you to network with other teachers across the province and even the country, provides opportunities for professional growth, and can be very empowering. We particularly need to recruit members early in their careers and might consider initiatives such as providing child care services during branch meetings.

Moreover, studies show that most teachers are drawn into their union through personal connections. In that vein, Executive members and branch presidents need to personally encourage the participation of teachers who demonstrate leadership potential but who may be hesitant to become involved. Branches could also host events that highlight NLTA services and invite guest speakers to provide workshops at the Branch level in an attempt to raise member awareness.

### **Sherri Rose**

Membership engagement is a huge concern. It was a priority of the current Executive and should definitely be a priority for the next Executive. I hear from many branch presidents that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to fill branch positions and get people to attend meetings. I think we need to consider some sort of branch restructuring. I also believe that with the technologies that are now available, many things can be done electronically through Facebook, Twitter, email and via video and teleconferencing. There are branches currently using Facebook/Twitter accounts and it seems to be a great way to keep members informed and to advertise meetings, etc. The Alberta Teachers’ Association currently has an app for teachers, which I have looked at and think is great. At some point, I think we need to explore the idea of an NLTA app for teachers.

### **Gabe Ryan**

This year, approximately 600 teachers in NL are in a position to retire. We are losing our most experienced professionals, not just in the classroom, but also many who have been active contributors to the NLTA in their branches, SICs and at the

provincial level. Teachers, especially new teachers, need to be engaged in our profession to address issues of relevance. The NLTA needs to continuously seek guidance from teachers in the field so that effective strategies can be formulated.

I consistently ask young teachers to consider becoming involved, once tenured, and to become future leaders of the NLTA. Politicians think in four-year segments, but we have to foster involvement that will sustain as teachers migrate through their careers. The NLTA must continue to access new teachers through social media and seminars that encourage involvement within our Association. Where possible, Executive members, including the President, need to be more visible in schools and branches.

### **Colin Short**

Membership engagement is a concern within the NLTA. Teachers are by nature caring and supportive members and lead citizens in their communities. However, we do not always see large numbers of teachers become involved in their Branches or in their Association. Teacher workload issues may be affecting this, as teachers have little left to give at the end of each day. When NLTA Executive and staff visit branches, more interest is developed. We must continue to offer school rep seminars, financial information seminars, and NLTA led and sponsored professional development sessions around the province to spark interest from our members. Branches need succession plans in place to recruit new Executive members who will replace retiring veterans.

### **Sean Weir**

Having been a member of the Provincial Executive for the past four years, I can categorically state that membership engagement

has been a concern of mine and the Executive table of the NLTA. I truly believe that our members want to become more involved in the Association. Supporting evidence can be taken from our members' strong participation in the "Contact Your MHA" campaign during the last round of negotiations. Yet, there was a poor voter turnout in the last vice-presidential election. For me, the problem appears to lie in making direct contact with our members. Teachers are very busy these days and any free time that they may have is becoming more and more guarded. I feel that one of the keys is for our Executive and staff to get out into the schools and talk to as many teachers as possible and hear their issues and concerns.

### **Jeanne Williams**

When the issues are very important to teachers, membership engagement is not a concern...93% of teachers voted to ratify the recent Collective Agreement.

I believe the Association must always look for opportunities to encourage members to take an active role in the decisions that affect them. Membership engagement is always a critical entity.

An Ad Hoc Committee on Membership Engagement was setup to examine ways to involve teachers. The recent survey conducted by this committee has shown that teachers are interested in providing their feedback. The committee will now use these responses when developing a strategic plan for Membership Engagement. We must continue this committee into the next term. Meanwhile, we must ensure that there is continuous communication with our members and that a long-term communication strategy is developed.

## **4. Given the fiscal challenges that the province appears likely to be facing during the next few years, what are the key priority issues you feel should be addressed by the NLTA in preparation for the next round of collective bargaining?**

### **Bill Chaisson**

Fiscal restraint is nothing new to governments in this province. It is not simply about what they have to spend; it is about making education a priority.

In the next round of negotiations, we must protect what we have and I would like to see a focus on:

- (a) Workload: We need to establish class size caps within our collective agreement.
- (b) Compensation: In our last round of bargaining we received 5% over 4 years. This is not keeping pace with inflation and if we see any premium increases in our pension contributions we will be falling further behind. If we are going to be template bargaining on compensation, all public sector unions must meet and agree to accept nothing less than the rate of inflation. One union cannot set the standard for all unions.
- (c) Leaves: We now have Family Leave; we need to look to Personal Leave for all teachers.

### **Wallace Childs**

We need staff in our buildings, first and foremost. This includes teachers, administrators and support staff such as Student

Assistants. We cannot allow further reductions to impact teaching and learning the way it has. We need hard caps in place for class sizes and courses at the high school level. Teachers need guaranteed preparation time. Many jurisdictions across Canada have this in place and we need to take a hard look at it as well.

### **Maureen Doyle-Gillingham**

In anticipation of the fiscal challenges that the province may be facing in the next few years, the NLTA needs to focus on maintaining teacher workload and class sizes. Pension reform will be a key issue. While we all recognize that the pension cannot stay the same, it is vital to maintain pensions for future security.

### **Derek Drover**

The last round of negotiations posed significant challenges as teachers faced egregious attempts to strip benefits from our collective agreement. With a looming bleak fiscal prognosis, again the task will be to protect negotiated gains and ultimately to grow the agreement. Teachers must not bear the burden of correcting current and future financial uncertainties, as we did not create this dilemma; we must not accept the erosion of salaries and stripping of benefits. We must continue to strive to strengthen Article 30.01, among others, to alleviate heightened

and unrealistic demands/workload and to support student learning within the inclusive environment. Investing in mega projects is often trumpeted by politicians, however there is no greater investment than investing in teachers and students. Succinctly put, “the main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth” (Desiderius Erasmus).

### **Kevin Flynn**

The role of the Provincial Executive during the next two years is to facilitate a process that will make the Association strong as the NLTA heads into another round of collective bargaining. As the membership prepares for the next round of bargaining, the most important point to keep in mind is that any collective agreement negotiated is fair and equitable. Priorities that must be addressed by the next negotiating team include the protection of sick leave, Schedule E, severance, pensions, and group insurance. It is of paramount importance that teachers are not asked to bear financial burden for the fiscal challenges of the province. It is more important than ever that the NLTA remain strong and united.

### **Craig Hicks**

The financial climate of our province should not influence the work of the Collective Bargaining Committee as they gather input from the membership in preparation for their opening proposal. Each priority has its own merits and has been identified because it will ultimately improve our profession. To maintain the protection for our pension plan as outlined in Schedule D of our current Collective Agreement is paramount. Also, I do feel that the ever-increasing workload, accompanied with discipline issues, has impacted the well-being of teachers. This issue was highlighted at our February 2015 Joint Council meeting. It is a growing concern in our profession and solutions to resolve this should be aggressively pursued at the negotiating table.

### **Trent Langdon**

As we prepare for the next round of collective bargaining, it is essential to protect those ‘poisonous items’ that were eventually removed during the last round of negotiations.

In particular, the protection of rights related to teacher contracts and hiring procedures. Schedule E (MOU re: Class Size & Workload) continues to loom for all teachers as class composition, expectations associated with the Assessment & Evaluation Policy, scheduled duties, multi-grade classrooms, and mental health and behavioral needs take a major toll on our ability to meet the curriculum and maintain a healthy workplace. These items must remain as primary components of our stance. Directly related is the lack of human resources for the ‘inclusive’ classroom; this issue must be prioritized.

The last round of negotiations provided us with an opportunity to scope out the political and financial landscape and can serve to provide insight and direction for the upcoming round.

### **Donna Reddick**

There are a number of key priorities our Association needs to focus on for the next round of collective bargaining. First, it is important to negotiate limits with regards to workload. Class size in all grade levels needs to be addressed and the

soft cap should be removed. Class size should also consider student needs; the one size fits all formula does not work in all classrooms. We need more IRTs and more Student Assistant time for our special needs students. Further to this, given recent societal changes, the current formula for Guidance Counsellors of 1-500 is also inadequate. This formula needs to be changed to better allow counsellors to deal with the abundance of issues they face on a daily basis. The Association additionally needs to continue to rally government to provide support and professional development for technology integration in order to promote 21st Century learning initiatives.

### **Sherri Rose**

Our negotiating team made many positive gains for teachers in the last round of collective bargaining but there is still much work to be done. As stated earlier, workload is still a huge concern and is definitely a contributing factor to teacher stress. We must strive to eliminate lunchtime supervision for teachers. There are gains to be made with regards to the timeliness of the hiring process. While summer vacation should be a time of rest and relaxation, job uncertainty causes much stress for many teachers over the summer. Hopefully, our pensions will be reformed in a fair and equitable manner by the time we begin our next round of bargaining, but that is certainly a huge priority and of utmost importance. Finally, although facing fiscal challenges, we must still seek guaranteed personal leave days for teachers.

### **Gabe Ryan**

As Chair of the Collective Bargaining Committee, I invite teachers to contact me to identify important issues and priorities as we enter our next round of negotiations. In November 2015, the NLTA can inform government that we wish to open discussions, but the timing must be done strategically. These negotiations will include defending what we have already gained and seeking improvements to working conditions. Additionally, investing in the education of our youth far outweighs the cost incurred by not doing so.

Accurate statistics of true classroom size that do not include administrators and program specialists in the number of teachers actually delivering curricula is something that we must acquire. As student mental health issues become more prevalent, we must get more supports in place. Same for inclusion. We must protect our pension plan and we can never again agree to contracts that do not at least keep pace with inflation.

### **Colin Short**

Soon we will be in a new round of negotiations and with the current economic climate, it may be difficult. However, as an Association we must be committed to ensuring that our collective agreement remains our key focus. We must not allow our contract to be stripped or for changes to occur that will negatively affect any of our members. We must advocate for hard caps for classroom enrollments, adequate preparation time for all teachers, sufficient administrative time for all schools, proper resources, both human and material for inclusive schools and to ensure that all students, no matter where they live in our province, can and will receive a high standard of education.

## Sean Weir

Teacher workload must be addressed in the next round of negotiations. This needs to be done by insisting on an increase to the preparation time of our members. There has to be some guarantee for teachers in our contract that time will be allocated during the work day to perform the new role of the teacher. This new role includes (but is not limited to) increased documentation of student behaviour issues, the attendance at IEP meetings, the provision of intervention programs/strategies like “Early Success” and “Soar to Success,” updating Power School on a regular basis, implementing PBS initiatives, and preparing inclusive/differentiated lessons as required by our employer. It seems that almost every day there is a new initiative coming from the districts, or the DOE, that teachers are being tasked with implementing. Most times, teachers are given limited PD on the topic and expected to “make it work.”

## Jeanne Williams

Through my involvement with teachers, 23 years as an active NLTA member, speaking with in excess of 2500 teachers in the

past few years, invariably teachers raise the issues of:

- Workload:
  - Supervision – No teacher should be required to supervise students during the lunch period. Many other affiliate teacher organizations have this clause and so should we.
  - Adequate preparation time for all teachers every day.
  - Class size and teacher allocation.
  - Length of the workday for teachers.
- Personal Leave days
- Maternity leave top-up
- Increase the sick leave benefit of teachers starting in the profession since 2006

Another very important aspect of collective bargaining is the protection of our current contract. We must prevent contract stripping by the employer and protect the benefits we have. We must ensure that the fiscal challenges facing the province do not negatively impact our next round of contract negotiations.

## 5. The NLTA supports inclusion practices in the school system. However, there are aspects of the current inclusionary model which need to be revisited in order to make it conducive to a positive learning environment for all children. What changes to this inclusionary model, and its implementation, do you think the NLTA should pursue with government?

### Bill Chaisson

We need to seek changes in the implementation of the present model. I believe the following:

- (a) All schools need to be given the same number of PD days they had during the pilot. This would allow for collaboration and problem solving.
- (b) We need to move to a truly needs based model of allocation. If a school can clearly demonstrate the need for more resources, they should be given the resources.
- (c) The allocation of IRT and Guidance needs to be increased if we are going to meet the diverse needs of all students in our schools.
- (d) We are in an excellent position with a provincial election on the horizon. We need to lobby each political party to commit to implement the recommendations from the Inclusive Education Committee.

### Wallace Childs

Teachers realize we need to do things differently so that all children can learn to their potential. No argument there. But the fact remains that we need resources (and this includes more bodies in our schools) to make this work properly. Teachers just don't have the time to deal with every aspect of this model that is needed to make it work properly. We need to ensure follow up takes place, not just training the staff and then leaving them to implement this model. A few days training does not make a school inclusive. There needs to be a review of what is working well and what isn't and we need to listen closely to teaching staffs for these answers.

### Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

Upon review of the current Inclusionary Model I feel the philosophy of the model may not be flawed, but its implementation and communication of the model may be the problem. In order to ensure that children are provided with the best possible opportunities within this model there is a need for greater support at the classroom level. The various needs of all children, whether they are emotional, physical or educational, in our current system is placing an unrealistic demand on classroom teachers. With the pressure to deal with a very loaded curriculum along with the other demands that we encounter in our classrooms each day, teachers are struggling to keep up.

Additional people support and adequate curriculum resources are paramount if inclusion is to work the way it is intended.

### Derek Drover

The *Schools Act* clearly states our children's right of access to education and Section 33 underscores teachers' responsibilities regarding "instruction to students... and fostering student learning"; furthermore, the Departments' website defines inclusive education to include "the right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality education." With this in mind, now is not the time for teacher reductions! Government must be held accountable to adequately resource inclusive education – to not place teachers and school administrators in untenable positions. Improved IRT, SLP, guidance counselor, educational psychologist, and other itinerant allocations to support program planning and

service delivery, as well as adequate access to assessment tools such as WIAT-III to accompany implementation of DSM 5, are essential. A system which underscores collaboration must provide the time/sub time to effectively collaborate during the workday. With effective application of Article 30.02, there is hope for improvement.

### **Kevin Flynn**

Inclusion continues to stand out as a major source of contention within education. The initial intention of the inclusionary model was to provide a positive learning environment for all children. However, the current inclusionary model has created an environment plagued with frustration for all educational stakeholders and has revealed an environment that is neither safe, nor conducive to learning for all students and teachers. In order for the inclusionary model to properly function, there are a number of key issues that the NLTA must pursue with government. Some of the key issues identified by members of the Association include lack of adequate human resources, lack of co-teaching opportunities, increased workload/demands, and lack of proper professional development opportunities. To help remedy the issues surrounding inclusion, the NLTA needs to lobby government to change the inclusionary model to a “needs based” formula and to provide beneficial professional development opportunities to keep current with special education issues.

### **Craig Hicks**

Since the roll out of Phase 1 of the Inclusive Schools Initiative in 2009, it has been continuously surrounded with controversy. The key to the success of this initiative lies with the ability that classroom and instructional resource teachers have regularly scheduled uninterrupted time to collaborate. This is compounded with the expectations that school administrators arrange time for divisional and grade level planning meetings. For the most part it has been a “make do” with what you have philosophy which has not been fair to teachers and students. I feel that we need to continue lobbying the Department of Education for more IRT positions and guarantee time during the instructional day for collaboration between IRT and classroom teachers. I am optimistic that the additions to Article 30.02 in our collective agreement will now address the concerns of resourcing the Inclusive Schools Initiative.

### **Trent Langdon**

Our schools have not been allocated the essential human resources required and we are continually asked to “make things work”. The system requires:

- A paid position for a Student Support Services Department Head who can contribute to the organizational and leadership needs within the Service Delivery Model.
- An increase in allocation for primary/elementary instructional resource teachers to focus on early intervention.
- A significant increase in the instructional resource teacher allocation for in-class and small group supports at all grade levels.
- Increased preparation time such that co-teaching models

and differentiated instructional strategies can be effectively implemented. The needs of all students must be considered, including those without exceptionalities and those that may be gifted.

- An increase in the allocation for student assistants to address significant behavioral needs within the inclusive classroom.
- An infusion of specialty teachers and supports for students with Autism.

### **Donna Reddick**

The NLTA supports the inclusive model. However, problems arise when the necessary resources – books, IRT, professional supports and administrative support – are not available. By its nature, inclusion gives children the opportunity to receive instruction in the regular classroom with their peers. The inclusion policy necessitates that teachers utilize differentiated instruction to accommodate the individual learning styles of all the students in their class. This situation has unfortunately led to a downloading of work and responsibilities on the classroom teacher. Teachers are overwhelmed and left with feelings of inadequacy; try as we may the task becomes unmanageable. Inevitably we end up trying to “make do” and that is not good enough for our students. Our Association needs to be proactive in our discussions with government in impressing upon them the need for more manpower and funding to help support teachers in their diverse classroom situations.

### **Sherri Rose**

Inclusion has been the topic of conversation for quite some time in our province. While the NLTA fully supports the philosophy of inclusion, the implementation of it has indeed been problematic and wrought with challenges. The two key issues we need to pursue are human and material resources, which of course, are both monetary issues. We need an increase of human resources in our schools. Our current teaching allocation is insufficient to fully support the model and make it work to its full potential. We simply cannot create the type of learning environment our students need. Secondly, we need more material resources. A wider variety of resources need to be readily available in order for teachers to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all learners in our classrooms.

### **Gabe Ryan**

The inclusionary model, as it currently exists, is just not working effectively in many schools. Our most at-risk students who need extra help to succeed are often excluded in a regular classroom setting as individual classroom teachers deliver layered curricula to a wide array of learning styles. To wit, inclusion does not necessarily mean students cannot be brought to an alternate setting to work one-on-one or in small groups with another teacher. However, the entire support services team, Educational Psychologists, SLPs, Guidance, IRTs, is woefully under-resourced. There are just not enough human resources dedicated to the growing needs of at-risk students.

Our most recent contract provides for a review of the inclusionary model and the committee, with NLTA participation, is specifically mandated to make recommendations re resourcing

within six months of current contract expiration. It is paramount that this committee makes informed recommendations and strongly advocates for their implementation.

### **Colin Short**

All students deserve to receive a high level of education. The inclusion model is great in theory, as we should celebrate individual differences and ensure that all students are educated with their peers. However, I feel that this initiative has never been properly resourced. The system needs additional instructional resource teachers to work with and collaborate with classroom teachers to deliver the curriculum and to plan differentiated lessons and differentiated assessments. Teachers need adequate preparation time to collaborate and prepare for inclusive classrooms. Some students require small group pull-out for selected objectives and schools must be designed to allow for this. Teachers need purposeful professional development that will address their needs to prepare for inclusive classrooms. Schools need to have flexible schedules to allow for more individual attention for all students.

### **Sean Weir**

The NLTA should continue to work to ensure that all aspects of the inclusionary model are properly resourced. Over the years, I have spoken at length of the challenges that schools face in, first, obtaining a diagnosis for struggling learners and then delivering a quality program for all students in the classroom setting. This I will continue to do, but I honestly feel that the speed at which students are diagnosed with exceptionalities must improve if this inclusionary model is going to ever be effective. Currently, students must have vision/hearing screening completed before any educational assessments occur. The problem lies in the fact that schools must rely on parents/guardians to get the screenings completed. Often, particularly in rural areas where travel costs may be exorbitant, these are not being done. This barrier to special services programming must be removed by having all students' hearing/vision screening completed at the school level.

### **Jeanne Williams**

There are insufficient resources to support the inclusionary model and its implementation. The changes the NLTA should pursue with government are:

- Class size – Number of students in a classroom should be based on the identified needs in the classroom.
- Increase the preparation time and collaboration time for classroom and Instructional Resource teachers.
- Additional personnel – to provide the supports needed in the classroom. One teacher cannot meet the needs of all students. Students who are unable to work independently and need constant adult attention compromise the learning of others. The unstructured part of the school day, recess and lunch, often require increased supervision for students who need very close supervision. This often means more teachers on supervision
- Professional Development required by the teacher to assist in teaching students with identified needs, should be ongoing based on the needs of their current classroom.



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