

Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

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Provincial Executive Candidate Question Responses

QUESTION 1: I would like to ask the candidates to discuss their views on the attacks towards teachers that occur on social media. Often there are serious accusations made where teachers are unable to defend themselves before their career and character is questioned. How do we deal with this?

Derrick Baker

Social media attacks against teachers are becoming more prevalent in the advancement of technology and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Some of these attacks from parents and students can be downright mean and nasty, attacking not only our character and reputation, but our family members. Our first reaction is to defend ourselves, and in a rural town where everyone knows everyone, this urge to do so is even more pressing. However, as educated professionals, we must remain calm and collected and refrain from any kind of response or comment to the social media attack. This would only add fuel to the fire and keep the issue alive and burning brighter. Next, we seek the advice of our leaders at the NLTA Office who will advise us on a course and plan of action, as every incident shall be based upon its own merits and dealt with accordingly.

Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

When any type of attack is directed towards a teacher it makes for difficult situations. When the attack is online it is alarming. Teachers need to be cautious about their own use and the potential negative impact of technology by parents/students. Often teachers are criticized, ridiculed and falsely portrayed on various websites. Teachers need to educate themselves, know their rights and seek assistance. Teachers should be familiar with NLTA Infosheet # 26, *Human Rights Act*, 2010, OHS Legislation, the *Schools Act* and the Safe & Caring Schools Policy. Under the new agreement, there is a heightened responsibility on the employer to deal with incidents of harassment against teachers involving parents, students and other groups outside of the school system, and to support teachers who are victims of harassment at any source. This is good news! Enhanced social media policy and supporting teachers on this issue has to be communicated for all to know.

Derek Drover

Succinctly put, such attacks towards teachers are unacceptable! Unfortunately, given the complexities of today's classrooms and the need for adequate resourcing, the vulnerabilities for unwarranted accusations exist. While schools attempt to educate students in proper digital citizenship via school-wide comprehensive digital citizenship action plans as per the provincial Safe & Caring Schools Policy, individuals – including adults – who fabricate, participate in, and encourage malicious social media attacks on NLTA members must be held accountable. With the strengthened language in Article 58 of the 2016-2020 collective agreement, a substantial contractual onus is placed upon the employer to ensure that the harassment stops and that individuals engaging in such behaviour are dealt with appropriately and/or disciplined. Further, the employer must be held accountable under its own social media use policy, which

clearly states that students are not to use social media sites for such derogatory purposes.

Kyran Dwyer

This is one of the most disturbing things about social media. However, it happens too frequently, and teachers are left feeling isolated and stressed. First it must be determined if a law has been broken by the comments on social media. It should be reported to police and let them investigate.

Our employer must act in a timely manner to support the teacher. The employer should issue a letter to the author of the post requesting they take it down and contact the teacher involved to meet and follow the Complaints policy. The teacher should also contact our Association for guidance and support and have the NLTA and employer work together on creating a reasonable response to prevent these events from happening.

Teachers should not be left on their own to defend themselves on social media.

Craig Hicks

Teachers' personal and professional reputations are often questioned by erroneous accusations which at times are posted on social media. Teachers do not have to tolerate such verbal abuse which impacts their well-being and undermines their ability to teach. The NLTA was successful in negotiating stronger language in Article 58. This article promotes a harassment free work environment and places greater expectations on our employer to support teachers of harassment and to take action against individuals who engage in this activity. Therefore, the District has a contractual obligation to protect teachers from violence and harassment in our schools. Our Association must ensure that the employer has fulfilled their responsibility to defend teachers and respond to those individuals who harass our members. As a member of Provincial Executive I will continue to inform teachers about Article 58 and address this concern at every opportunity.

Jamie Jenkins

This issue is becoming more prevalent in today's society and must be taken very seriously by our members, administration, the NLTA and our employer. The first step that a teacher in this situation should take is to contact their administration to let them know that this is occurring. This should be followed immediately by a call to the NLTA to get sound advice on what the teacher's rights are in this situation and to discuss what options are available to the teacher.

Article 58, of our recently ratified collective agreement, has an expanded definition of the term "harassment" and there is greater expectation on our employer to protect the teacher and take action

against those individuals who engage in harassment.

I would also encourage the teacher to take screen shots of the post which may be used if the harassment does not stop or escalates to a legal matter.

Kelly Loch

I take any attack on a teacher through social media as a very serious matter. Many teachers “brush off” these attacks and don’t do anything about it for a number of reasons. This type of attack on one’s career and character can be stressful and devastating. Teachers need to take a stand. First of all, take concerns to our employer and seek assistance. Contact law enforcement and see if anything can be done. It is important to explore avenues that can help mediate the situation. Parents and the public need to get the message that this type of behavior will not be tolerated. This topic was discussed at a recent Equity Issues in Education Committee meeting. There is work being completed on an education piece for the public. Educating parents/guardians is crucial. It is time for teachers to speak up about attacks towards them through social media.

Tracey Payne

Teachers are entitled to a workplace free of harassment. I believe the employer is responsible for protecting teachers while they are in school and from attacks which occur on social media. Teachers must be informed of their rights when it comes to such attacks. Teachers must be encouraged to use the rights they have within the collective agreement. We must work with the District to develop protocols to deal with these situations. Contact the NLTA for guidance and advice and keep administration informed. Keep good records and notes all the time. Complete the incident reports at the school level as well as at the NLTA.

Gabriel Ryan

Social media is doubtlessly a public forum where users can freely express opinions largely without consequence. It has become a very real and often disturbing part of our daily personal and professional lives. While the temptation is always there to engage those who would disparage, the ensuing discussion rarely ends without damage and the truth is often the first victim. I accept that the only actions and interactions I can control are my own, so as difficult as it can be, I generally choose to refrain from participating in discussions that cross professional lines.

Our most recent Collective Agreement puts an increased level of responsibility on the Employer to support teachers who experience harassment from any source, even outside the school system, including via social media. I encourage teachers to be aware of their right to protection and to always use NLTA resources when they are unfairly treated or characterized.

Joseph Santos

Personal attacks through social media are not only cowardly, but do not focus on solving any particular issue(s), instead bringing attention to the person making the comment. Most see social media posts as having very little validity. However, when news media react, they gain increased attention. We need to lobby government lawmakers to punish those who make defamatory comments using

social media. Harsher penalties need to be invoked on people who make accusations. We are all innocent until proven guilty, but our employer has not treated us this way by recently punishing one of our own prior to any investigation or without any proof of guilt. This attitude gives fuel to the fire and will not help when it comes to social media attacks. Teachers need to stand together, support one another, use our NLTA and available resources, and not let these cowardly acts potentially damage teachers’ careers and reputation.

Colin Short

Attacks on teachers via social media is one of the most important issues facing teachers today. Our positions in society make us the target, and platforms such as Facebook give the public easy access to launch these verbal assaults. The Association has to continue to educate teachers about the dangers that exist, both through articles in *The Bulletin* and through PD sessions. It is an issue that we have tried to address in the most recent round of collective bargaining with improved language in Article 58 and placing the onus on the employer to protect and defend our members. We have to monitor this issue closely as we move forward to see if these changes will make a difference. Once a teacher’s character is questioned, it is very difficult to undo the damage and we have to be vigilant in trying to protect ourselves and our colleagues.

Sean Weir

Unfortunately, social media attacks on teachers are becoming more and more prevalent in today’s society. This is a fact not lost on the NLTA. In our recently ratified collective agreement, improvements to Article 58 place a “heightened responsibility” on our employer to deal with incidents of harassment against teachers involving parents, students, and other groups outside the school system. In addition to this, the teacher involved should contact the NLTA so our administrative team can help to support the affected teacher. Finally, all teachers should encourage our colleagues who become the targets of harassment on social media to come forward and contact the NLTA. This is a necessary “first step” before any of our support plans can be put in place for our members who become the target of cyber attacks.

Chesley West

Undoubtedly, social media is among the most challenging of domains, not only in education, but in society at large. While it offers an opportunity for people to debate, share ideas, and foster positive change, we also witness its negative application in bullying, promoting ill-intended agendas, and spreading misinformation that can personally and professionally harm others. On a global scale, it is becoming commonplace that educators are becoming targets of such social media attacks. In such instances, I believe, as individuals and professionals, we must acknowledge these attacks for what they are and document and report all such occurrences to the NLTA so that full support can be provided in finding the best and swiftest resolution. In doing so, I believe we must be willing to apply any and all protections afforded to us from the Harassment Policy of our Collective Agreement through to the legal statutes of the *Provincial Defamation Act*.

Question 2: How will you address the concern of growing class sizes and the struggle for teachers to keep up with the demands of teaching such large classes with diverse learning needs?

Derrick Baker

Growing class sizes with diverse learning needs, loss of teaching units and lack of supports are major concerns for many teachers in this province. These are obviously workload concerns which can be lightened through parameters around class size and hard caps on enrollment as we move forward in the next round of collective bargaining. At the same time, growing class sizes can also lead to a Teacher Health and Wellness concern. As a member of Provincial Executive, the mental health and wellness of all teachers in this province remains a top priority for me and will be addressed at every opportunity.

Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

Teaching large classes with diverse learners continues to be a challenge in today's classrooms. Some answers lie in adequate resourcing, assistive technology and differentiated instruction. If today's classrooms are going to be successful, teachers need more people power, inservicing on new and upcoming assistive technology and financial assistance to purchase new technology. We need to reduce/eliminate the downloading of provincial government initiatives unless they are curriculum connected or they reduce the current high level of content in some courses. Assistance and partnering from other governmental departments for implementation and delivery would go a long way in teaching large classes with diverse learners. We also need to emphasize the need, and demand smaller class size caps and make them hard caps.

Derek Drover

Class size and class composition impact the effectiveness of today's multifaceted complex teaching and learning environment. To effectively meet the diverse learning needs, class sizes must be reduced coupled with improved resourcing; advocacy for such improvements must be ongoing and relentless. Under the *Teachers' Association Act*, we have an obligation "to promote the cause of education in the province by...affording to educational authorities...the benefits of the collective experience and advice of teachers on practical educational matters." Currently, the NLTA must leverage to the fullest its representation embedded within the committee structure of the province's Education Action Plan. Further, constant vigilance and preparation for provincial budgets is necessary, including sustained pre-budget advocacy highlighting the importance of class size and required resourcing of growing classroom complexities. Through contract negotiations, class size and composition must always be a priority to attain reasonable class size caps and student/teacher allocation formulae recognizing the diversity of needs.

Kyran Dwyer

We had the opportunity to address class size and diverse learning needs in the recent round of negotiations. A hard class cap could have been negotiated in return for giving up severance. It would have benefitted all teachers (and students) and would have negated public criticism that teachers were being greedy. This must be a priority for future negotiations.

CBC's *Inside the Classroom*, the President's Panel on the Status of Public Education, teachers' written submissions to MHAs and presentations to the Premier's Task Force were ways we highlighted issues in our classrooms and schools in the past. Most importantly, we involved teachers in these activities. However, over the last two years we seem to have become increasingly silent.

We must always be strong advocates for students with diverse needs and stronger advocates for our teachers who work in the classrooms with those challenges while informing the public on this.

Craig Hicks

Insufficient teaching allocations, classroom composition, unrealistic workload and the expanding number of diverse learners could unquestionably place educators in the role of curriculum instructors instead of classroom teachers. It is paramount that our Association ensures that Article 30 is not contravened and with every opportunity we advocate for more teaching units to meet the needs of students. As a Provincial Executive member I will voice my concerns and encourage teachers to do the same to School Councils, District Trustees and MHAs. Furthermore, I continue to support the NLTA's efforts to engage in meetings with NLESD and Trustees, the Minister of Education and their Deputy Minister. There are many avenues and opportunities to effectively influence educational decisions; however, to achieve the greatest impact it is crucial that we convey one united message from our membership. The strength of over 5000 teachers will be undeniable.

Jamie Jenkins

Class size and composition is very quickly becoming a tremendous workload issue for many teachers in this province. In order to make changes to improve this I believe we need to approach it on two levels.

First, we need to look at negotiating changes to the allocation model to meet the needs of the students and not just on simple numbers. With more teachers in the schools we will be able to lessen the workload of every teacher and give a more balanced classroom setting.

Secondly, if we are to ever get an improvement in the teacher allocation model, we must lobby government whenever possible with scientific proof that class size and composition does matter. We must also encourage parent groups, school councils, Learning Disabilities Association, etc. to lobby government for improvements as well. With all of us voicing our concerns, together we may be able to sway government.

Kelly Loch

First of all, teachers need to understand and accept that they are only human and can only do so much. Teachers need to take care of their own mental wellbeing first before any teaching and learning can take place. We need to continue to advocate for smaller class sizes and the resources to meet the diverse learning needs. Many teachers believe and have many years' experience to attest that

class size and the various needs of students in their care have a direct effect on student learning. We need to inform parents about our demands of teaching such large classes and that this is having a negative impact on their child's learning and achievement. Addressing the issue of large class sizes and the composition of classes needs to be a priority in the next round of negotiations.

Tracey Payne

Class size and composition remain concerns for teachers. The best solution is to negotiate a student-teacher ratio into our collective agreement. However, we have seen such attempts fall on deaf ears.

We need to partner with others to keep this issue in the forefront. The voice of parents can never be underestimated and they can be our greatest allies.

We need to work with school councils and encourage them to use the legislative authority they have to address growing class sizes.

The NLTA must engage school board trustees to speak out on the issue. Teachers must also be proactive; we need to respond to "call to action". Government will listen if there are thousands of voters who want a lower student-teacher ratio. They will not listen if only a handful of submissions are given.

Continue our public awareness campaigns, *Teachers Change Lives Every Day*, and *Invest in Our Kids*.

Gabriel Ryan

Class sizes are political decisions. Politicians are elected by a public electorate, many of whom have children and/or grandchildren in the public school system. We know that advanced societies place a premium on educating their youth and we must, as a society, show political candidates that they have no chance of representing us if their only consideration for education is making it adhere to a budget line. If they do not honour educational rights of our children, they should not be allowed to serve.

Research supports smaller, properly-resourced class sizes and consideration of class composition as the best learning environment for children. Despite worrisome signals from Ontario, we must advocate in every way possible to improve schooling for all children by having the proper resources in classrooms, especially sufficient teaching units.

Additionally, Occupational Health and Safety regulations mandate maximum limits. We are entitled to "safe and caring" schools.

Joseph Santos

This needs to be addressed through collective agreement negotiating and pressuring the government when deciding allocations. Class size cannot be approached as a teacher issue. It is in the hands of decision makers! The victims are students. Teachers do not have a voice. Elected politicians serve the parents of our children and have a voice in what happens in our classrooms. Parents, politicians, media, and the general public need to be made aware of the conditions of our classrooms. We need to educate the public on what it is like to be in a classroom that is overcrowded with many diverse learning needs. We have to come at it from the lens

of a student in one of those classrooms who does not have the resources they need to achieve to their potential. This education will ultimately put pressure on the government in both collective bargaining and the allocation process.

Colin Short

Class size and class composition is a major issue facing teachers. There has never been a strong clause in the collective agreement on this issue. We are at the whim of various governments who state a campaign platform number or then announce a number in a budget document. The boards then use soft caps and hard cap numbers at their discretion with different class sizes for English stream and French Immersion classes. There has never been a firm or soft number in senior high classes. Individual schools then adjust numbers to fit their allotments and needs. In the next round of negotiations this issue has to be addressed. Hard cap numbers have to be negotiated, reflecting the diverse needs of our students that are fair and reasonable for all grades. Teaching allotments based on the previous year's enrollment do not work.

Sean Weir

As we all know, teaching is not an easy job. For me, personally, with the continued growth in class size (or the increase in multi-grading situations) combined with the task of delivering curriculum to students with diverse learning needs, I have made a conscious decision to reduce the amount of extracurricular activities in which I take part. This is necessary due to the increase in my workload and the stress associated with fulfilling my professional obligations. With the continued downloading of responsibilities on classroom teachers, I felt that I had no choice but to do this. After all, my personal time is something that is still in my control. In terms of the Association, I will continue to support any, and all, lobby efforts that drive home the fact that teachers have a difficult job that continues to get more challenging and requires more human resources.

Chesley West

When the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes was released, it was no surprise to any educator that an underlying theme of the challenges related to the number and nature of needs in the contemporary classroom quickly emerged. We hear consistent reports that needs are so great that neither teachers nor students can perform to their potential, leading to student frustration and teacher fatigue – neither of which serve to fulfill the vision of a safe and caring learning environment. To address this, I believe we must continue to lobby government for essential resources to meet student needs like more physical spaces, technology, and educators. We must also take every opportunity to partner with stakeholders, especially parents and guardians, to educate them on the challenges we face in providing essential resources for student learning. We can then use this partnership to work towards the shared goal of fostering greater student success.

Question 3: The NLTA is an organization that promotes collective rights and collective action. What do you believe can be done to encourage greater member engagement?

Derrick Baker

Greater membership engagement has been a focus of this Association for the past number of years. Several campaigns such as *Teachers Change Lives Every Day* and *Inside the Classroom* have been successful in highlighting the concerns of teachers. Other initiatives including the creation of a Membership Engagement Committee, emails sent directly to teachers, a Facebook and Twitter account, continued publications of *The Bulletin*, and other electronic mediums such as Skype and Polycom, as well as traditional face-to-face meetings, all help to increase and address membership engagement. However, we must continue to do more to engage the younger teachers who often feel powerless and overwhelmed in their day to day tasks. As a member of Executive Council, I would advocate for the promoting and planning of workshops and relevant PD sessions at the local school level to encourage teachers to become involved and take ownership in their Association.

Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

I believe that membership engagement is a concern. The strength and cohesion of our Association starts and ends with the proactive engagement of as many teachers as possible. We need to ensure that more teachers understand the workings of the Association. The NLTA can assist all teachers by focusing on continued dialogue, mentoring, providing more opportunities for face-to-face interactions, and release time to participate in meaningful NLTA initiatives. We need to have grassroots initiatives where we get into schools and discuss and involve more new educators who are starting their teaching careers. Upon reflection, I would have benefitted from earlier financial planning, professional learning sessions relating to relevant topics of teacher wellness and work life balance, understanding the contract and just knowing what the NLTA offered and who to contact at 3 Kenmount Road. Making connections and starting the conversation early is key to overall better engagement.

Derek Drover

While avenues to membership engagement vary and evolve over time, the guiding principles, espoused in our mission statement, remain constant. As our mission statement delineates, “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.” Providing services that meet the needs of the membership requires continuous communication, transparency, introspection and self-assessment, ensuring avenues to achieving our mission statement are current and relevant to the membership. Seeking membership feedback on the services provided, such as through town halls, focus groups, and surveys, is a key component to improving delivery of services. Expanding on and modifying, as necessary, current programs such as financial information sessions, teacher wellness/work life balance sessions, and school rep seminars are vital. The services offered must be meaningful and relevant and thus must be member driven.

Kyran Dwyer

We need our own version of a distributed leadership approach that provides leadership opportunities for branch presidents. The NLTA must give serious consideration to providing release time (paid for by the Association) for branch presidents to visit the schools in their branches. This will allow branch presidents to know and engage teachers and to work with them. Every branch president should have at least one day or more (depending on the size of the branch) to do this work for the Association.

Teachers also need to be empowered and be knowledgeable of how to promote their collective rights. The NLTA must provide PD for members to be educated on their collective rights and guided in appropriate collective actions.

Finally, there needs to be a greater emphasis on collective action, which appears to have been absent for the past number of years. An engagement committee could provide recommendations on collective action.

Craig Hicks

Teacher engagement and promoting our profession are certainly priorities that I feel are the foundations of our Association. Since 2017, two new special interest councils have been formed: Health Education and Small Schools. These new SICs encourage and provide teachers with opportunities to become involved and participate in outstanding professional development in their respected fields. As a member of Provincial Executive I am looking forward to the restructuring of the seminars for school representatives and branch presidents. I feel school reps and branch presidents play a huge role in encouraging and promoting engagement at the school level. Therefore, it’s the responsibility of the NLTA to ensure that school reps/branch presidents seminars are current, reflect NLTA procedures and provide practical information that will increase membership engagement at the school and branch levels. The strength of our Association relies on teachers taking an informed interest in the NLTA and our profession.

Jamie Jenkins

Membership engagement is vital to the long-term viability of the NLTA and is a top priority for the NLTA.

Some ideas that may improve membership engagement:

- 1) Start by directly asking members what the NLTA can do to improve engagement.
- 2) Look at the branch and provincial structure to include greater representation of teachers on all executives and committees (e.g. early career rep, substitute rep, etc.).
- 3) Add a sharing section on the NLTA website. Then allow branch executives access to pose questions and share ideas that work for their branches. With greater communication and sharing we may be able to find effective ways to increase member engagement.
- 4) Update the duties of Provincial Executive. Currently, Executive members make contact with branch presidents. If the Executive member also contacted the school reps in their branch contacts, it would provide a more direct link between the schools and Provincial Executive.

Kelly Loch

Teachers are engaged with each other on a daily basis regarding a multitude of issues that we endure together. Membership engagement within our Association happens when there is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed with the voice of all teachers. Teachers will engage in supporting a cause when asked by the Association. We have seen this in the past and will continue to see this in the future. We support each other through our Association by our interactions with colleagues. It is vital for teacher ambassadors (Branch Executive) talk to other teachers about the issues we face and what we are doing to try to bring relief. Conversations need to be made throughout the entire collective agreement process. Information in a book such as *The Bulletin* isn't enough. We need to engage in the discussion piece about the issues and challenges we face as teachers of our organization.

Tracey Payne

Membership engagement continues to be a topic of discussion. However, we need to define what engagement looks like in 2019. We cannot use a 1970s litmus test to measure engagement. For example, attendance at a branch meeting cannot be used as the only measure of engagement. For some, engagement may be reading *The Bulletin*. For others, it may be involvement at the school, branch or provincial level.

If there is an issue of engagement, the answer must come from the membership. Let's ask these simple questions to our members:

- Are you satisfied with the opportunities you have for engagement in the NLTA?
- Are you satisfied with your level of engagement?
- If you are not satisfied, please indicate what the NLTA can do to help you become more engaged.

This information would be used to develop a plan going forward.

Gabriel Ryan

This just in! Teaching is not easy! Teachers are increasingly more worn out physically, mentally, psychologically and emotionally. Yet, more tasks are regularly added to an already full plate. That doesn't include all those activities teachers freely supervise outside the classroom to provide a memorable, comprehensive education for students.

Membership engagement has been on the NLTA's radar for my entire 12 years on Provincial Executive. To be honest, if I had the panacea, I'd have fixed it before now. We need more human resources to render our time more manageable. Until then, we will always be challenged to have larger numbers engaged. No one has yet invented the 25-hour day.

Notwithstanding, we need to grow at the grassroots level, to encourage new teachers at every turn to become involved in their professional lives. We need to look to very active branches, both rural and urban, to learn best practices from them.

Joseph Santos

Teachers need to know and need to want to know what the NLTA does and continues to do on a daily basis for the teachers in this province. Education is the key to engagement. Many teachers see the NLTA as an outside group, not dissimilar to the district or the government. Nothing can be further from the truth. Staff at the NLTA

work exclusively for teachers, no one else. Elected officials at the NLTA, do the same. Staff and Executive work for teachers, period! Teachers also need to start working for teachers! Our NLTA is just that, our NLTA, not "THE" NLTA; we are the NLTA and if we do not support and use it to help in our daily lives, who will? Our NLTA is always promoting and working towards the health and safety of teachers. How it does that is often not known by many teachers. Educate yourself!

Colin Short

The NLTA offers many opportunities to engage members. Our standing and ad hoc committees offer opportunities for members to get involved. Our school rep seminars and conferences such as CONTACT and DSS are excellent professional development opportunities. Yet member engagement has been an issue for the NLTA for a number of years. It has been a priority for many past Provincial Executives and a number of things have been tried to address it. In the past two years, membership engagement has been added as a standing agenda item on each standing committee. If re-elected, I will propose the establishment of a new Standing Committee on Membership Engagement – this committee will not be geographically restricted, but will consist of membership representing gender, geography, teaching assignment, early, mid and late career teachers. This committee will be given a broad mandate to address this issue and offer recommendations.

Sean Weir

Membership engagement is very important for our Association. With the recent ratification vote and the disparity from the Joint Council vote results, there appears to be a communication problem between NLTA leadership (Executive members and branch presidents) and the members on the ground. I feel the cure for this miscommunication lies with technology. Today, communication between our members should never be easier. We may need to explore opening the lines of communication through a "members only" chat room on social media where members can freely interact with NLTA leadership at their convenience. I feel that we, as an association, do need to reach out to our members on a regular basis and remember that true communication is a "two-way" street. In saying that, I think that the new executive must try to repair relationships with some of our "disgruntled" members in an attempt to strengthen and unify our Association.

Chesley West

As our name indicates, the NLTA is an association – a group of people connected with a joint purpose. For us, this purpose is to support each other in our professional and personal lives so we may be most productive in educating our children. To best fulfil this purpose, I believe each and every one of us must be fully engaged with the NLTA through effective membership education. I believe we must offer more opportunities through any means and media for teachers to come together to learn what the NLTA does for us, how it operates, and the degree of influence that teachers can have, through the NLTA, on education in this province. As educators, we fully understand the truth behind the idea of knowledge being power. To engage and to empower our members, we must, as acknowledged in our latest ad campaign, invest in ourselves.

QUESTION 4: The NLTA membership has just ratified a collective agreement that will expire in August 2020. What will be your priorities in the next round of collective bargaining?

Derrick Baker

Priorities in the next round of Collective Bargaining:

1. Workload concerns – teachers are asked to do more and more each year and it seems that government expects us to continue with this trend. It must stop.
2. Class Sizes – growing class sizes with a multitude of diverse learning needs is making it impossible to do our job. This issue needs to be addressed.
3. Teacher Health and Wellness – as an association we need to ensure that adequate resources remain in place for teachers to take care of themselves, both mentally and physically. Teachers have the right to these resources and this remains a very important priority for me.
4. Promoting the Profession – low numbers of teachers entering the profession, and lack of substitutes are forcing teachers to double up classes and cover for each other. Too many teachers are being denied leave and it is a growing concern.

Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

As we have seen from the latest round of collective bargaining, the process, the vote result and the overall conversations surrounding the agreement were very difficult in the current political and economic climate of our province. While the vote was ratified, the message was clear – many members were not satisfied. I anticipate the next round of collective bargaining will not be any easier for our profession. As teachers, we need to have a voice and have our voices heard. This goes back to membership engagement which will be critical in the next round of negotiations. My priorities would be: 1) Teacher Health/Wellness & Resources; 2) Workload; 3) Membership Engagement; and 4) Wages. Education is important and it has to be a priority for our government!

Derek Drover

There is no doubt that the last round of negotiations was a demanding protracted process during which the NLTA worked to mitigate concessions and to strengthen contract language. The next round of negotiations must focus on improvements to the contract, including improved remuneration and working conditions. With the Conference Board of Canada projecting the NL “economy to grow by 5.2 per cent in 2019, far surpassing any other province” (VOCM.com December 13, 2018), a clear message must be sent to government – class sizes, class composition, teacher allocations, improved sick leave provisions, as well as teacher remuneration, are of paramount importance. Reducing class size maximums, acknowledging class composition factors, and embedding improvements to the teacher allocation model into the collective agreement will contribute to alleviating teacher stress and workload and will contribute to improving the teaching and learning environment in general.

Kyran Dwyer

We can only promote the priorities we are willing to stand and fight for collectively. Priorities must be for all teachers and our goal is a

collective agreement for all, regardless of years’ experience, grade level or area of teaching. We have a serious division when over 40% of our members feel disenfranchised enough to vote against a tentative agreement. We must ensure that this never happens again. The six priorities for the last round of negotiations need to remain for this round.

The NLTA needs to make the teaching profession so important – so valuable – that it makes people want to be teachers. This must be the responsibility of every teacher in our Association, the Provincial Executive, and NLTA staff. As an Association, we must stop doing government’s dirty work in pitting us against each other and agreeing to what they want at the expense of young teachers.

Craig Hicks

The Collective Bargaining Committee is responsible for consulting teachers and developing the priorities for our next round of negotiations. As a member of Provincial Executive, I will respect the priorities that teachers have provided to the Collective Bargaining Committee and ensure that every effort is made to obtain them. I feel that salary, workload, financial health and wellness are major priorities that must be addressed during the next round of collective bargaining. The message from teachers must be strong, clear and united; the line has been drawn. We need serious movement on salaries, teacher workload must be addressed, and financial health and wellness are real issues that cannot be ignored by government. Teachers cannot be held responsible for the financial mismanagement of government’s actions and be burdened with its cost. I am committed to ensuring that the collected will of our membership is heard and represented in the appropriate venues.

Jamie Jenkins

The collective bargaining process collects information from all teachers and through Joint Council and the negotiation committee comes up with priorities and our opening package. I personally would like to see:

- 1) A wage increase. The cost of living is going up every year but we haven’t received a raise in quite some time.
- 2) There is a continuous increase in workload and teachers need them addressed. E.g., If teachers had guaranteed preparation time, hard class size caps, proper resourcing of courses and an increase in report card preparation days, this would alleviate some of the added stress to our profession.
- 3) A gain in all leave benefits (sick and family leave) including the reinstatement of sick leave for all teachers to the level before September 2006 as well as an increase in the number of sick days a teacher can use before being required to submit a medical note.

Kelly Loch

1. Pay Increase. This is top priority. Four years of no pay increases. We have had no wage increase in 8 of the last 12 years. We cannot keep up with the cost of living.
2. Teacher workload. Having the necessary teaching unit resources

will lessen the teacher workload of the regular classroom teacher.

3. Teacher Rights. We need a safe and secure place of work free from bullying and social media attacks.
4. Teacher wellness and mental health. If all the above issues were addressed, teacher wellness and their mental health would be drastically improved. I believe we should have non-discretionary leave days outside of our family leave days which is for our children. Teachers need to take care of themselves. Will this cost the government money? No, because they will save on sick leave.

Tracey Payne

After this current collective agreement, teachers will have gone twelve years without a wage increase while inflation strips us of our buying power. In the next round we need to focus on:

- A wage increase for teachers
- Teacher health and wellness (both physical and mental)
- Teacher workload
- Guaranteeing a safe, harassment free work place for teachers
- Protection of current benefits and to say no to any further contract stripping.

Gabriel Ryan

We have just finished a difficult round of negotiations. While we made some significant gains in articles previously identified by our membership, it is folly to assume that our entire membership is content with our new collective agreement. Many are not. Questions 1 and 3 touch respectively on the ubiquitousness of social media and on membership engagement. I have no doubt that social media played a role in some of the articles of the tentative agreement being misrepresented and thus, poorly understood. But, if we can evoke the same kind of membership engagement going forward, something very good will have been achieved.

I have long held that we should never accept a penny less than inflation rate for salary increases, so next time we deserve decent increases to offset too many years of losses. That's #1! Working conditions and sufficient numbers of teachers to deliver diverse curricula are close behind.

Joseph Santos

- Pay increase that would be equal to or greater than the inflation rate.
- Appropriate maximum class cap size at all grade levels.
- Formula used to calculate "number" of students in a classroom. Students with exceptionalities could count as more than one student depending on the exceptionality(s).
- An actual needs-based system when determining allocations and not a budget-based system.
- Sick day equity and the elimination of the two-tiered system that was previously negotiated.
- Guaranteed time for report card preparation for each reporting period.
- Granting tenure, to include replacement positions as probationary time.
- Paid technology department head position.

Colin Short

I have a number of priorities for the next round of collective bargaining. First and foremost, increases in salary and allowances. Since September 2012, teachers have had only two increases in salary – a 2% increase in 2015 and a 3% increase in 2016. All expenses continue to increase – taxes, electricity rates, food, fuel and our salaries – need to be addressed. Secondly, all teachers need to have workload issues addressed – a proposed class size model that is reflective of class needs and diverse learners for all grades in all levels for both English and French Immersion students and teachers. Third, an end to the two-tiered sick leave provision. All teachers should be placed on the prior to September 2006 formula. Fourth, guaranteed preparation time for all teachers in all schools in the province. Teachers work more overtime hours without remuneration than any other worker in any workplace.

Sean Weir

My priority in the next round of collective bargaining would be to encourage teachers to voice their concerns by making submissions to the Association as part of our collective bargaining process. These submissions are vital to the position put forth by the Association in our opening package to government. As a member of your Provincial Executive, I would never put my own priorities ahead of the collective wishes of the teachers of this province. However, in speaking with teachers across the province, I feel that teachers would like to see the following issues addressed in the next round of bargaining: teacher compensation, the teacher-allocation formula (needs-based as opposed to numbers-based), the provision of guaranteed preparation time for all teachers, the provision of sufficient administration time in schools, supports for Inclusive Education (more specifically, training, diagnosis/assessments, and human resources), violence against teachers, and sick leave.

Chesley West

Before any collective bargaining discussions with our employer begin, I believe the NLTA's first priority must be to engage as many members as possible – with my preference being 100% – to clearly identify those elements of the collective agreement they wish to see added and/or amended to make their careers more personally and professionally sustainable. From that process, I would expect that a top priority would be to protect and improve upon those elements of the current agreement that are seen as strengthening our position. I would also expect to see a specific focus on elements of the contract that revolve around the hiring process, working conditions, and compensation. Elements that ensure that good people are going to choose education as a career – a career they are going to practice here, in this province, rather than in another jurisdiction where opportunities are more personally and professionally lucrative.

QUESTION 5: What are the greatest challenges facing the NLTA today?

Derrick Baker

Some of the greatest challenges facing the Association today would include:

- The struggle against the growing trend of anti-unionism by governments and private sector companies at the national level (to take away our ability to collectively bargain and/or strike).
- Trying to improve and strengthen our contract in the midst of tough, political and economic times.
- Addressing and eliminating the issue of workplace violence for all teachers.
- Gender equity – encouragement and promoting of women involvement in NLTA leadership roles.

Maureen Doyle-Gillingham

I believe that public perception of teachers and membership engagement are two challenges that face the NLTA. We have taken great strides to improve public perception with the *Teachers Change Lives Every Day* campaign. Teachers' influence extends way beyond the classroom and into our communities, enriching our entire province. This campaign helped teachers feel valued and to be supported in their communities. We need to continue to build on what has been started. I also believe this is a critical time for member engagement. We need to get out into the schools with accurate information, to engage teachers early and directly – have the conversations, both positive and negative! We need to continue to promote the NLTA, educate and involve the membership at every opportunity. We need to provide opportunities to give teachers a stronger, more unified voice. We need to stand tall, rally together and be heard and seen!

Derek Drover

As advocates for the teaching profession and education in general, there is no shortage of challenges facing us: teacher stress, workload, wage freezes, violence and harassment, class size and composition, inadequate teacher allocations, under-resourcing, inadequate sick leave provisions, to name a few. As we move forward, we must avail of all avenues to lobby and advocate for improvements to our teaching and learning environments while addressing outstanding issues. Despite recently concluding a round of protracted negotiations, which initially opened with nothing short of poisonous attempts to strip the collective agreement, we are now, again, on the cusp of preparing for a new round of negotiations. Protecting and growing the collective agreement is paramount and concessions are not in order. We have been burdened too long with shouldering the financial woes of the province, heaped upon us by provincially elected governments as the cost of living skyrockets. Enough is enough!

Kyran Dwyer

The greatest challenge facing the NLTA today is engagement of its members. We must build teachers' hopes and empower them to be part of an association that supports all and not divide us. We must get back to Frederick Bancroft's vision of "united action" and setting priorities for the "protection of teachers". We need to focus on teacher priorities — and stop worrying about how other unions negotiate. We need to stop settling for less than what allows

us to carry out our professional responsibilities.

Government's agenda cannot dictate to the NLTA what is best for us – such as our two-tiered sick leave plan. The dialogue must change to one of strength and pride.

Many teachers who voted NO to the tentative agreement and some who voted yes want our Association to speak boldly to the issues facing teachers.

No more settling at the expense of teacher priorities!

Craig Hicks

The major challenges facing the NLTA include teacher workload and teacher engagement. Sometimes the lines are blurred regarding what the employer expects from teachers and the contractual requirements of a teacher's job. In light of feedback from the tentative agreement, it is paramount that the NLTA highlight the role of teachers and their contractual obligation. Any expectation to participate in activities that occur outside the instructional day or during the summer break may contribute to extra workload and more teacher responsibilities. The busy lives of today's teachers are overwhelming and demanding. This leads to a real challenge for our members to become involved and engaged. I feel that social media platforms, supported by regional town hall style meetings, will ensure the delivery of accurate information and immediate feedback from our members. As a member of Provincial Executive, I would certainly welcome input regarding teacher workload and membership engagement.

Jamie Jenkins

The greatest challenge is the lack of widespread teacher engagement. This in turn creates a substantial disconnect amongst our membership as a whole.

We need teachers to speak up and make issues known to the NLTA. If a teacher has a concern, they should contact their school rep, branch/Provincial Executive, NLTA staff or the President. It is imperative that members become engaged in the NLTA and bring their concerns forward.

I know teachers are busy, stressed and always want to do what's best for their students, but we need teachers to actively participate in the NLTA. We need teachers to voice their concerns and participate in calls to action from the NLTA. The more members we have participating, the clearer our message becomes to our employer and Government. We need a united voice speaking the same message to enable change to occur to benefit our members and our profession.

Kelly Loch

One of the greatest challenges facing the NLTA today is the need to fight to keep the rights that we have fought for and gained over the years. There is a clear attack on unionism throughout the country and now it is at our doorstep. We need to plan and strategize how we will deal with future provincial budgets. The Premier's Task Force (PTF) suggests some positive strategies to help improve our education system. The PTF action plan saw the creation of the Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy. This may prove to be a significant workload for our teachers. The NLTA is afforded a voice around the various committees struck for the PTF. This puts us in a positive position to be a voice for teachers. It is vital

teachers have a voice for issues such as class size and the reporting of violence in our schools towards our teachers.

Tracey Payne

The greatest challenges facing the NLTA today are:

- Workload, class size, class composition, soft caps and downloading
- Teacher mental health and wellness
- Lack of human resources to address the increasing needs in schools
- Working conditions
- Unreasonable expectations
- Adherence to the collective agreement

Gabriel Ryan

From a global ideology, I believe that the attack on unions is one of our biggest challenges. Fifty years ago in the United States, one-third of its workers belonged to a union. That number has fallen to about 10%. Since the 1980s in Canada, we have devolved from about 40% unionized workers to under 30%, or a loss of about one-quarter. While public servants are still largely unionized, our employee count is falling and an increasingly non-unionized public is led to believe by corporate-driven politicians that we are to blame for our economic woes. The preponderance of far-right ideologues loves a scapegoat.

Unions increase standards of living, and countries which treat employees fairly across all economic spectra are progressive societies. I am an unapologetic unionist who believes that all aspects of our working lives can only improve if we grow stronger. A loss of workers' rights creates diminished working conditions.

Joseph Santos

- Teacher health and safety, both mental and physical
- Greater and growing workload and expectations being placed on teachers and administrators.
- Teacher disengagement and disassociation.
- Rural and urban issues and often how different they are.
- Dealing with a school district that does not place the value on teachers that they deserve.
- Making the district and government understand that happy and healthy teachers make the system work; without those things there is chaos.
- Teacher shortage, recruitment and retention.

Colin Short

As a professional organization representing some six thousand teachers, the NLTA is facing a number of challenges. While we have seen some recent good relations with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, current relations with the NLESD have seemed strained. Recently, the District has been severe in its discipline of teachers and have ignored clauses in the collective agreement. As partners in education, all parties must develop a cordial and cooperative approach to working together for the betterment of all students and teachers in the province. Far too many teachers are leaving the profession early, the number of teachers accessing long term disability benefits is growing and there has been a spike in EAP services requested by teachers. Trying to provide assistance to members continues to be a growing concern. Teacher workload issues continue to dominate Executive and Joint Council discussions.

Sean Weir

Apart from the topics I have previously addressed, I feel that one of the greatest challenges faced by the NLTA today is the implementation of policies and procedures by our members associated with the Premier's Task Force pilot project. I feel very strongly that this initiative needs to be closely monitored so that all of the expectations placed upon our members are within the parameters of our collective agreement. This initiative is changing the roles and responsibilities of our members like never before, particularly when it comes to students who are facing challenges within the school setting. In my opinion, many of the expectations placed upon our members (particularly the number of meetings required as per the Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy) are unrealistic and cannot be performed during the current workday of our members. We must ensure that these unrealistic expectations do not become our workplace reality.

Chesley West

I believe the greatest challenge facing not only the NLTA, but all stakeholders in education, is the strengthening of our profession to one that will attract and retain strong educators and produce socially and academically strong students. Similarly, we are faced with the incredible challenge of finding a positive, fully-engaged, and united way forward in a socio-economic climate that is absolutely demanding we all do more with less – including less of us. Tied to these growing demands on educators, professionally, are the challenges of the spill-over of work-related stressors into our personal lives. We are becoming more frequently and more seriously ill as we push ourselves too far in an effort to compensate for the often overwhelming lack of resources in our classrooms. In short, our challenge is to find the best means, together, to heal the system and, in doing so, heal ourselves.



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