

## Question 1:

### What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the NLTA today?

#### Derrick Baker

I feel that the greatest challenge facing NLTA today is that of Teacher Recruitment and Retention. As an association, I think we need to do more. We need to partner with government and Memorial University to revamp the Faculty of Education to reflect the modern classroom of today's schools. We need to educate, promote and encourage the younger generation that teaching is indeed a good career choice with positive benefits and a decent salary. In addition, incentives and other perks could be integrated into the program to encourage students to enter the education field. We need to start planning and dealing with this issue now, instead of waiting for it to happen and then reacting to a crisis situation. Much like the doctor/nursing shortage in NL.

#### Lori Barry

There are many challenges currently facing our school system that the NLTA is tasked with addressing, however, I believe the greatest challenge for the NLTA right now is ensuring our membership feels heard and supported. Our association is only as strong as its membership. We need the full support of our members in order for our efforts such as the Class Size Matters campaign, petitions lobbying government and requests to contact government officials, to name a few, to be effective. In talking with teachers throughout our province and looking at social media, there seems to be a lot of mixed emotions amongst teachers as to how they fit into the system, how they feel they are being treated and whether or not their voice is being heard. I believe it is very important that the NLTA work with its membership to understand how they are feeling and find ways to help everyone feel valued.

#### Clifford Budgell

The greatest challenges facing the NLTA today are teacher workload and classroom size/composition. One of my classes is made up of 30 grade nine students. Fifteen of them have an LD and require accommodations. I have zero supports for this class. I have to provide accommodations for all 15 students' unique needs myself, while also balancing the needs of the other 15

students. It has been my biggest struggle this year, and it is the daily reality for most teachers. The demand for supports, to be provided solely by the classroom teacher, has grown exponentially in recent years, and additional supports for these students have nearly disappeared. Added to this is the demand placed on teachers of increased administrative (non-teaching) paperwork, "voluntary" PL after working hours, and expecting us to switch teaching platforms during the pandemic without time for transition. These are only a few issues facing teachers today.

#### Hollis Cull

I firmly believe that the greatest challenge facing us today is fallout from the Pandemic that we are all experiencing. I cannot fathom how public safety protocols set out by the CMOH for all sectors of the business community somehow does not apply to the school setting. While I know that the NLTA has been vocal in voicing our concerns, it seems that Dr. Fitzgerald is the darling of the media and province and speaking out against her would probably set teachers in a very negative light. It is a "damned if you do and damned if you don't" situation and I'm unsure of the best move to take. I do know that many teachers are in an immunocompromised position and the very thought of exposing themselves to potential danger is certainly leading to many stressful days and nights. The outbreak from MPSH certainly has shown how easily and quickly it can spread. Last year a similar outbreak from Caul's Funeral Home resulted in a complete shutdown. This year, with teachers prepared for online instruction, we are still open! It doesn't make logical sense, and I feel that getting the general public to support the plight of teachers in this situation is the greatest challenge we are facing at the moment.

#### Angela Dawe

The lack of unity among the membership presents a substantial challenge to the NLTA. There are many perceived and uncomfortable divides. Such as:

- the end of buying back university years in 1991
- the introduction of two-tiered sick leave in 2006

- seniority hiring (ratified in 2019)
- post-employment employer cost sharing benefits for “newly-hired employees” ratified in 2019 and amended in 2021
- the unenviable situation of many substitute teachers (especially during the Spring of 2020)
- the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected individual situations/responsibilities and placed some members at higher risk than others

For every divide, there is a wide spectrum of individual identification – rife with valid, varying, and authentic opinions/feelings/experiences. I encourage more membership engagement in the discourse, debates, and democratic decision-making process through branch involvement (attending general meetings/serving on a branch executive). I believe the unification of our membership to be of great paramountcy.

## Derek Drover

All roads lead to workload and stress! Given the complexity of the teaching profession, there are many interrelated parts to this question. The Canadian Teachers’ Federation literature review *Recruitment and Retention of Teachers* (June 2020) suggests, “Burnout is a serious issue that affects teachers regardless of their level of experience” (p. 4) and “many do not have time for a proper work-life balance...” (p. 4). NLTA EAP statistical data update for 2019-2020, prepared for school representatives, shows stress to be a most significant factor. During February’s NLTA provincial leaders’ forum, Premier Furey referred to education as the most important institution in our society, yet stress levels and workload continue to increase, being compounded by COVID-19. To promote optimal safe and healthy work environments, issues of systemic resourcing must be at the forefront including class size and composition, improving the teacher allocation model, enhancing leave provisions, and securing additional wellness supports.

## Stephanie Drover-Edmunds

The treatment of teachers is one of the greatest challenges facing NLTA. Teachers are the onsite experts in the education system, yet when we offer solutions or speak out, we can be rendered expendable. The back-to-school plan laid out by Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, has ignored the plan for other segments of society. Everyone else was mandated to follow strict guidelines, but when teachers voiced their concerns about not following these same restrictions, our concerns fell largely on deaf ears. There has also been a lack of consistency in various parts of the province in applying restrictions. Teachers are frustrated by this and feel less valued because of it. If we all work for the same employer, should we not operate under the same policy, same interpretation, same fair treatment? That shouldn’t be too much to ask and I know it would solve so many of our problems.

## Darryl George

The NLTA derives its strength from the capacity of its members. Our combined talents and skills provide the necessary building blocks upon which to successfully construct meaningful and healthy professional lives. Our membership has a wealth of individual and collective resources. The challenge is to effectively harness all of this capacity. Our members face high demands on their time. Professional and personal lives are busier than ever. It is in this busy environment that we must demonstrate that our active participation in the NLTA has never been more critical.

We will face enormous pressures in the years ahead. Successfully meeting those will require us to call upon all members to be supportive of the initiatives and actions of the Association. To date, the NLTA has made great strides in improving member engagement. Our focus going forward must be to use every available and emerging resource to further advance this goal.

## Kelly Loch

The Mental Health/Wellness of our members is the biggest challenge facing us today. We have been in crisis mode since the start of this pandemic in March of 2020. The concern for the safety of our families, colleagues and students is taking a toll on many of us. This can affect our mental as well as our physical well-being. We need to look more closely at the effect of this pandemic and we need a strategic plan. I will advocate for an Advisory Committee on Mental Health/Wellness for our members. We can review our Programs and Services to see what changes, if any, can be implemented to support us. This committee can gather data about the effects on our Mental Health while teaching during a pandemic. A report with these committees’ findings and suggestions will come back to the Provincial Executive for action.

## Tracey Payne

The greatest challenge facing the NLTA today is mental health and wellness of teachers which has been amplified due to the challenge of COVID-19. Mental nervous disorders represent 33% of teachers on long-term disability. Teachers are continuously being asked to give more while receiving fewer resources. Teachers are doing the best they can in an environment of inadequate resources, which is placing unreasonable stress on many. Teachers need to be provided a safe, healthy, and supportive work environment. This has been complicated with the onset of a pandemic.

I feel that the other challenges facing the NLTA are workload/class size, collective bargaining and the Greene Report and its implications. We must resist any cuts to the public sector.

As an Association, we face challenges and we have concerns. We are aware of the issues facing our profession, but we must remain optimistic and we must strive to overcome our challenges.

## Tyrone Power

There is no one greatest challenge facing the NLTA as there are multiple issues impacting teachers' abilities to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. Increased workloads, mental health, class size and composition, lack of adequate human personnel including guidance counsellors, a lack of adequate resources including technological infrastructure, the loss of benefits for new teachers, the inability for teachers to engage in Professional Development and Learning designed to meet their needs, violence against teachers and job insecurity have at one time or another been identified as taking away from ensuring teachers can adequately perform their jobs which ultimately will impact student success.

## Colin Short

The greatest immediate challenge facing the NLTA today is navigating the COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines established in our members' workplaces. The mantra that our province has been encouraged to live by, "People, place, time and space", has been firmly entrenched in most public spaces, with the glaring exception of our schools. Our members have been working in overcrowded, poorly ventilated and dangerous workplaces. Our Association's first requests for meetings with the Chief Medical Officer of Health went unanswered, the school re-opening plan seemed rushed and inconsistent. Teachers have been on the front lines trying to provide safe learning environments for the youngest members of our communities with inadequate human resources and personal protective equipment. At the time this response was being prepared there were approximately fourteen members with COVID-19. I sincerely hope they all recovery quickly.

## Sheldon Slaney

"A union is only as strong, effective and powerful as the members who participate in its operation and activities" (*Massachusetts Nurses Association, 2021*). One of the greatest challenges facing the NLTA today is membership engagement. There is an obvious disconnect between teachers in our province and our Association. A clear eye-opening example of this disengagement is the staggering number of Association members who did not cast their vote in the ratification of our collective agreement. Only 44% of our members voted on an agreement that directly impacts each and every one of them in their profession and surprisingly, that was considered to be a good turnout. I commend the current Executive for their efforts in this regard; however, I feel it is paramount that we continue to connect with every member of our Association, establishing relationships that will strengthen us and create solidarity between us all.

## Russell Stockley

The greatest challenge our Association members

continue to face is the ever-increasing workload expectations that are brought down by our employer – after school meetings, extracurricular activities, teaching and learning team meetings that often result in many lost preparation periods, report card preparations, parent-teacher conferences, after school professional development days. These are only some of the multitudes of additional duties that teachers are either obligated or "encouraged" to participate in.

After the instructional day is completed teachers are tired. However, many of them deal with the difficulty of juggling both work and home life when the work life can feel consuming and overwhelming. How does this affect the health and wellness of our teachers? Teachers must be able to take a stand and echo a word that many are afraid to say: "no".

In order for teachers to stand up for themselves, they must have an association behind them that will encourage and support.

## Della Way

Allocation Model, Mental Health and Communication.

Teachers have experienced a different year and the expectations being placed on them has led to increased workloads and mental health issues, primarily because teachers have not been included in the discussions or asked for input or ideas to make learning successful in these ever-changing times. The expectation is they just make it work. Teachers stepped up because that is what they do, but it has created enormous amounts of stress and it has affected people's physical, mental and emotional health. The NLTA needs to continue to be a voice for teachers on these issues and continue to help open up the communication barrier that exists between the employer and its members. Holding what worked/did not work sessions like we did at our last Joint Council provincially would help with the communication barrier.

## Sean Weir

The greatest challenge facing the NLTA today is a lack of unity among the membership. I believe that there are "divides" that exist between certain demographics within our Association. Over time, these rifts have developed due, in large part, to the end results of the collective bargaining process. Over the last 15 years, we have seen the onset of differing sick leave provisions for members, the institution of seniority hiring, and the reduction of post-retirement benefits for new members. Without doubt, some of these were concessions which, in fact, may have been legislated by government, while others were actually viewed as "gains" to the contract which had been sought after for many years. The time has come, under the direction of the new executive, to address these internal issues and restore the unity we've been lacking as it will be vital going forward into the next round of negotiations.

## Question 2:

Protection of income during recovery from a workplace injury is a concern for members. In the event of lost work time due to an injury on duty, provincial legislation currently prevents employers from providing employee benefits in excess of those available through WorkplaceNL. Specifically, workers' compensation wage loss benefits (85% of net wages up to a maximum of \$2,615 bi-weekly) fall far short of most teachers' regular income. Members who have Long Term Disability coverage under the NLTA Group Insurance Program may be eligible for a benefits "top up" (up to 85% of regular net income), but this is still a reduction in pay. Because of this, teachers often experience the inconvenience and hardship of overpayment recoveries due to delays in workplace injury claim approvals. Injuries on duty may not be frequent occurrences for teachers, but they do present significant financial stress when they occur. If elected to Provincial Executive, how would you seek to ensure that teachers do not face financial loss and stress as a result of workplace injuries?

### Derrick Baker

To ensure teachers of this province do not face financial loss during an injury at work, our Association needs to lobby government to change the provincial legislation currently in place that deals with injured workers (Workplace NL). The compensation wage loss benefit of 85% of net wages, is far too low and needs to be adjusted upwards. In addition, the NLTA Group Insurance Plan and the Long-Term Disability coverage also need to be amended to include such provisions and allow injured teachers to receive full salaries and benefits while recovering. With these proposed changes or a combination of both, only then can teachers continue to receive their regular pay during their recovery period and reduce the stress and burden that is faced as a result of workplace injuries.

### Lori Barry

I believe lobbying the government for a change in legislation would be a very important start. Benefits need to be more reflective of the claimant's salary, especially considering the reduction is a direct result of employment. Also, employers need to have the option to top up a salary to ensure the employee does not have to endure financial loss. In the interim I believe that we need to work to ensure that teacher safety is priority in all schools. We need to educate our teachers on their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and ensure that our employer is diligent in maintaining an environment that upholds the OH&S standards. Regional or branch meetings can be held

specifically to inform teachers of their rights and the options they have when they feel that their rights are being infringed on. Teachers should also have easier access to protective equipment that would help protect them in situations where their safety could be compromised.

### Clifford Budgell

I have a few colleagues who have experienced this hardship and I completely understand why this question would be top on the list. I've seen how difficult it can be on them when it comes to paying for everyday expenses while unable to work. First, we can lobby the government for a change in legislation to increase the amount of compensation a worker can get. This would be difficult but the NLTA is known for their great efforts in lobbying the government. Another resolution is to bring forward an option for top up for teachers who have been off due to injury in the next set of negotiations. This would be our best route to help those who find themselves in this situation.

### Hollis Cull

I believe that this is an issue that can be better addressed by reaching out to other unions. As stated, teachers are not a high risk for workplace injury, however, it does happen (I have a teacher on my staff off since October with a workplace injury). I would propose as a member of Provincial Executive to reach out to other unions, especially ones that specifically

deal with workplace injury more regularly. I would bring a stronger, united voice to this issue advocating change in policy at WorkplaceNL ensuring regular salary is fully covered. This may result in a higher fee of LTD premiums as well which can be brought to the membership to vote on.

## Angela Dawe

One thing you will learn about me, is that I will never make promises of things that are beyond my individual control. This does not mean that I will not fiercely advocate for change for the benefit of our membership, but I, myself, cannot make such promises.

That being said, I will most certainly advocate for a change in this regard. When members are injured on the job – whether it be from violence, accident, hazard, or an emotional injury from abuse/harassment/trauma, I too, would like to see a remedy to this issue. I'm willing to learn what avenues to explore, to ask questions, to advocate, and to seek solutions. I am most definitely a profound believer that no one should be *further* disadvantaged for sustaining a workplace injury.

## Derek Drover

Dealing with workplace injury, delays in claim approvals, and the associated reduction in pay is unequivocally stressful. The income replacement rate is at 85%, however, WorkplaceNL benefits are calculated based on an individual's net earnings with insurable gross pay capped at a maximum; even with the LTD non-taxable top-up benefit, income loss occurs. While the Association may seek improvements to Article 16 and Schedule J of the provincial collective agreement where possible, and to Article 15, legislative changes to the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* would necessitate a lobbying effort by the Association. The Association recognizes the challenges posed by workplace injury as evident in the provision of the Group Insurance LTD top-up benefit and in the reduction of NLTA membership fees when receiving WorkplaceNL benefits. In addition to future lobbying efforts, it would be wise to heighten awareness of the application process as well as current NLTA supports.

## Stephanie Drover-Edmunds

First and foremost, no worker should suffer a loss of income during, potentially, the most vulnerable time of their life. Whereas, this is an issue that traverses so many sectors of society. I believe it prudent for the NLTA to liaise with other associations, unions and organizations at the provincial, regional and national levels to develop a strong and informed lobby to effect changes in current legislation. Furthermore, in order to create areas of expertise on this particular file, appropriate NLTA staff, working with a dedicated committee, should be selected to collect and research

information from various sources to build the case for improvements on behalf of injured workers. NLTA should extend its reach across the country through its affiliation with the Canadian Teachers' Federation. As a member of CTF, we should easily be able to ascertain what is happening throughout Canada and hopefully build on successes in other jurisdictions.

## Darryl George

Everyone deserves to work in an environment that is safe and allows freedom from injury. The primary goal should always be to prevent injuries from happening. Therefore, as an association, we need to continue to advocate for the effective operation of OH&S committees, the availability of proper protective equipment, adequate training, appropriate resourcing and instructional safe spaces.

In the event of injury, it is equally important to strive to eliminate any additional stress caused by financial loss. The legislation dealing with injury on duty has a broad reach. Consequently, it would be prudent for the NLTA to work both independently and in conjunction with other groups to lobby government, with the goal of eliminating the 'loss of benefits' provisions that is the current norm. In addition, the NLTA could explore the possibility of alternate insurance coverages that can be accessed to help bridge any shortfall in earnings.

## Kelly Loch

The worry and concern for what the future can bring after a workplace injury can be very stressful. The last thing members should have to worry about is the financial loss. We can advocate on many fronts for a change to Provincial Legislation that allows equal pay instead of a percentage. Why should teachers be penalized for making more than the maximum? There should be no maximum – only equal pay. We can also look at our Long-Term Disability Coverage and see what can be done to improve this entitlement. NLTA can also investigate how a financial fund may be set up to help our members in a financial loss during a workplace injury. NLTA has funds for other endeavors such as an emergency and Johnson Insurance also contributes to a fund for members who have insurance through this company.

## Tracey Payne

As a Provincial Executive member, I cannot **ensure** anything. However, I can promise to advocate for all teachers of this province at all times. I will encourage all teachers to be enrolled in the LTD and I will recommend all teachers to not opt out of this very important plan. It is the best protection for all teachers. I am not able to change the legislation that states that any person injured on the job must apply for worker's compensation. However, I will seek to have an increase in the top-up in the collective agreement.

I will advocate for the top-up to be increased. NLTA presently tops-up to 85% and if we negotiate with government for an additional 10%, then teachers would be at 95%.

## Tyrone Power

This will require cooperation between the NLTA, the District and the Department of Education to modify and improve teacher ability to take the time necessary to recuperate from injury. Firstly, a recognition by the employer that the scope and definition of “workplace injury” is expanded to not only include physical injury but can also include mental and emotional injury brought about by the increased demands on teachers. Secondly, the Association will have to ensure that the application process to file for workplace injuries is simplified and there is a timely response for teachers with minimum delays in the awarding of benefits. Third, the ability to access long term disability will have to be addressed within the CA to recognize the impact of workplace injuries that exist. Finally, the time limit for use of benefits must be extended to ensure teachers have the opportunity to take the time needed to recuperate.

## Colin Short

Ensuring that teachers do not face financial loss and stress as a result of workplace injuries is an important responsibility of the NLTA. The first way to do this would be to use the existing leverage we have through Occupational Health and Safety legislation to ensure safe workplaces. I applaud all of our members who have currently filed grievances to help keep our workplaces safe. As owners of our Group Insurance Plan, we may be able to increase Long Term Disability coverage, however, this could bring with it a significant increase to members’ premiums. Costing of this initiative should be considered and explored by Group Insurance Managers. The best way to fix this issue would be through negotiations with our employer and to lobby for changes to provincial legislation under Workplace NL. We could partner with other labor organizations in this effort as these changes would help all workers.

## Sheldon Slaney

As a currently appointed Group Insurance Manager for the NLTA, I have a firm knowledge of member concerns with regards to workplace injury. It is important to highlight that this issue is discussed and negotiated during each renewal period and as a board we are diligently working to find ways to improve Long Term Disability payout. As a member of the Executive, if elected, I will be in a better position to gauge perspectives and hear suggestions from our members, bringing those proposals back to the board. In addition to the board’s commitment to improving Long Term

Disability payout, we recognize that early preventative strategies to assist teacher wellness is key. If we as teachers can reduce stress due to workload and class size, to name a few, we are better able to take care of our own physical and mental needs, and in turn decrease the number of workplace injuries.

## Russell Stockley

Governments have consistently failed schools and teachers by not having adequate support and cleaning staffing within schools. This has caused many teachers to take it into their own hands and put themselves at risk by cleaning or doing other duties outside of their mandate. We must educate our teachers on the OH&S regulations at the worksite as well as hold governments accountable in order to make sure our workplaces are safe by having enough human resources available to do so.

I would also investigate the feasibility of an NLTA workplace assistance program. As highlighted in the question, many teachers can become overburdened due to the loss of wages after a workplace accident. An ad hoc committee may be able to design a program that is pragmatic and realistic to assist colleagues hurt at the workplace through no fault of their own.

## Della Way

Unless faced with this adversity most educators are not aware of the financial burden that can be placed on families when someone is injured at the workplace. Unfortunately, this is a legislated 85% of net income up to a maximum of \$68,000 and the paperwork involved to get started can lead to undue hardships. The NLTA can lobby government about the hardships this creates for individuals who get injured on the jobsite. I would like to educate members on this issue by way of information sessions – see if the membership would be interested in taking a proposal to the managers of the insurance program to get some extended help to the Top Up Program that exists under the LTD Coverage. This would see an increase in premiums, but if this is something that the membership is interested in, then I would be in full support of listening to our membership on all issues.

## Sean Weir

Before answering this question, I will state that if I am elected to Provincial Executive, I will never make promises to members that I know I cannot deliver upon. For that reason, I would never “ensure” anyone that, under my leadership, members wouldn’t face financial loss or stress if they were to suffer a workplace injury. However, I can state that I would certainly participate in a lobby effort to change the provincial legislation, if that was the collective will of the table. Furthermore, as an elected member of the executive, I would ensure that the membership was

made aware of their “right to refuse” unsafe work in their workplace as per the current OH&S legislation. This could be done through articles in “The Bulletin”

and through the various communiques already utilized by our administrative staff. I believe, in this case, prevention is the best medicine.

### Question 3:

**The NLTA membership has just ratified a two-year extension of the Provincial Collective Agreement that will expire in August 2022. What do you think the three main priorities should be in the next round of negotiations?**

#### Derrick Baker

The three main priorities of the Association during the next round of negotiation should be:

**1) Teacher mental health and wellness:** This is a major concern that affects every teacher in this province. As an association, we need to work together to identify challenges that affect teacher health and wellness. We must support all teachers and provide assistance through NLTA Programs and Services and ensure this is included in the collective agreement.

**2) Class size and composition:** This has been a major concern for teachers throughout the province. The increasing size and composition of today’s classroom is constantly changing and increasing the workload of teachers in our schools. This must change and become a crucial part of our collective agreement.

**3) Enhanced Collective Bargaining:** This priority affects all aspects of teacher life, both professional and personal and affects every classroom and every child. We must strive to make gains for every member of our Association from monetary gains to workplace improvements, sick leave, family leave, and class size.

#### Lori Barry

The next round of negotiations needs to prioritize workload, substitute teachers/replacement teachers and salary. Workload seems to be the underlying issue for most of the challenges that teachers face and remains the biggest contributor to teacher stress and burn out. It has been obvious throughout this pandemic when we have been going through unprecedented times and having to make tough decisions and accommodations that workload is often not considered by others in authority who make decisions that affect teachers. We need to ensure that we are protected and have rights through our contract to keep workload realistic and manageable. I also feel that substitute teachers and replacement teachers need a stronger voice and more protection. These are the people who should be working their way into jobs and yet often feel their rights are not considered and feel inferior to teachers with permanent jobs. We need to be able to hold on to our young enthusiastic peers by providing protection for them when it comes to seniority and priority in job selection. The topic of salary is a very important one considering the lack of or minimal increase over the past few contracts.

#### Clifford Budgell

The three main priorities need to be avoiding contract stripping, addressing teacher workload, and dismantling multi-tier contracts. The first priority is pretty straight forward; we need to make many demands in our opening packages so as to avoid contract stripping. We need to keep what we’ve negotiated in previous contracts. The second priority would be teacher workload. This can be negotiated through approaching classroom size and composition. If we can get a reasonable classroom cap, it would decrease the amount of non-teaching work a teacher has and increase teacher allocations. You would see benefits with duty, teacher distribution with extra-curriculars, and teacher collegiality – not to mention improved student-to-teacher time. Lastly, we need to break the multi-tier contract and make it more inclusive of all teachers, new and seasoned. In the last negotiations, NLTA attempted to give all teachers equal sick leave, and we need to continue working toward this goal.

#### Hollis Cull

It might sound covetous, but I still think that a priority should still be remuneration. Prior to this 4% raise, we’ve endured 8 of the past 12 years with ZERO %. The cost of living has increased dramatically, especially in the past year with COVID, and teachers need to be compensated accordingly.

Teacher stress is very high. Supervision duty has increased significantly this year. There are new and increasing work demands around RTL, COVID-19 precautions, online learning, etc. with no increase in preparation time. Focus on student SEL is positive, but the amount of extra preparation, curriculum adjustments and lengthy virtual PL sessions are exhausting. Teacher mental health needs to be a priority. I believe teacher workload is tied directly to the stress teachers are feeling. I believe both these issues should be addressed as one because increased workload certainly contributes to the stress on a teacher’s mental health.

Thirdly, class size and composition is something that needs to be addressed. With RTL being a major strain on classroom teachers, and more accommodation being expected of teachers in regards to diverse learning needs, this is certainly an issue that needs to be prioritized.

## Angela Dawe

### 1) Sick leave

Two-tiered sick leave must be improved. This may take time, but we need action to improve the disparity – and not through further contract stripping.

- It can be challenging to obtain a medical note. Aside from the people without a family doctor, doctors have limits on when they can provide a note (i.e. the patient must be seen at the time of absence). This encourages the unwell to go to work/attend a clinic – effectively spreading illness to others. Lessons learned from COVID-19 cannot be dismissed.

### 2) Teacher/TLA Wellness

- Workload/workplace concerns impacting physical/mental health
- Public Health measures
- Increasing EAP lifetime funding limit
- SEL and trauma informed practices with regard to staff

### 3) Workload/Workplace Improvements

- Class size/composition
- Staffing
- Guaranteed preps
- More fulltime substitute teacher positions
- Transparent hiring practices for positions exempt from the seniority clause
- Flexibility to work from home when possible, if preferred and equipped

## Derek Drover

While the last round of negotiations did achieve a 4% increase in remuneration for the membership, many outstanding interconnected issues remain for the next round of negotiations. The goal of engaging in the provincial collective bargaining process is always to protect and grow the collective agreement and, as such, to strive to attain priorities articulated by the membership. As chairperson of the most recent provincial collective bargaining committee, responsible for preparing the most recent NLTA provincial opening proposals based on feedback from the membership, it is clear that much work remains for the next round of negotiations. While seeking competitive remuneration during each round of negotiations remains an important factor in recruitment and retention, addressing class size and composition, stress, and workload, and seeking other improved paid leave provisions, such as to protect all members during public health emergencies such as the current coronavirus pandemic, are paramount.

## Stephanie Drover-Edmunds

As a member of the most recent NLTA negotiating team, I learned that achieving an agreement in an environment where the employer often seeks to strip previously gained rights is a long and arduous process. As teachers, we must always be well-informed and

stand strong to negotiate a contract that is fair to all members. For my entire career, I have been listening to my colleagues and the three main priorities many of them mention for subsequent rounds of negotiations include class size and composition, protection of pensions for all members, never letting control slip from our hands, and hiring practices that help provide junior teachers with options of obtaining permanent positions as well as regaining the sick leave provision lost in 2006. All teachers should have equality in their chosen profession, so there should be no disparity whatsoever in what is available to one teacher versus another.

## Darryl George

We cannot allow government fiscal realities to be corrected at the expense of our members. There is a myriad of issues that we need to focus on in the next round of negotiations, such as monetary considerations, teacher workload, teacher wellness and teacher safety and security.

In terms of priorities, a good starting point would be teacher salaries, which have experienced a decade of stagnation. With the threat of higher inflation on the horizon, a significant salary correction is required. Next, pressure on teacher workload is a constant concern and due to emerging technologies, societal changes and fiscal restraint, this may increase significantly in the years ahead. A third priority is teacher wellness. In particular, improvements are necessary in the teacher leave provisions, especially for those members hired after 2006. These priorities are interconnected and require a coordinated and strategic approach if we are to succeed in negotiations.

## Kelly Loch

**Mental Health/Wellness.** We need non-discretionary leave outside of our family leave days. Teachers need to take care of themselves so they can continue in the profession. The findings and suggestions from the suggested Advisory Committee can be presented to the government. They need to be a part of the discussion to contribute to solutions for our members!

**Recruitment and Retention Plan** is needed for young teacher colleagues entering the profession. The time is overdue to support and invest in our younger generation of teachers through contract negotiations and an updated internship program.

**Teacher Workload.** Having the necessary teaching/TLA unit resources will lessen the workload. The RTL policy is beneficial, only if the necessary resources are put in place. Resources for this policy have been slowly dwindling for the past three years in K-6 schools. The RTL policy is being introduced in 7-12 schools. Where are the resources for this?



## Tracey Payne

The three main priorities in the next round of negotiations should be workload due to class size and class composition, mental health and wellness of teachers, salaries and post-retirement benefits. Teachers have earned all benefits and we cannot be willing to give them away. We need to open negotiations when the political and economic climate is conducive to do so.

## Tyrone Power

The three top priorities for the next round of collective bargaining must include a) addressing of the teacher allocation formula to a true needs-based system and not a numerical based upon formula which has many ways to be interpreted, b) there must be a reduction in class sizes to alleviate the mounting pressures on teachers to meet student needs which includes a true cap system and not an arbitrary one: K-3 (15), 4-6 (20), 7-12 (25), c) there has to be steps taken to decrease the workload for teachers and d) ensuring substitute teachers needs are met. If these are not addressed, the profession will face a teacher shortage issue, and this will further impact the delivery of education in the province.

## Colin Short

I think that the top three priorities for the next round of negotiations are: (1) workload – specifically class size and composition, lack of human resources, including administration time, classroom teachers, guidance, IR support, SLP, TLA, LRT and reading specialist positions. Increased expectations around the Premier's Task Force report and lack of proper preparation time for all members. (2) Improved sick leave for teachers hired post September 1, 2006. The current provision is inadequate to address member's needs especially with many members having to travel for medical appointments. This problem has been worsened by COVID-19. (3) Salaries – while the recent combined 4.05% increase during the two-year extension provided some relief – the reality remains that teachers have experienced eight years in fourteen with no salary increase and with the cost of living increasing steadily over that time, we are not keeping up with this pace.

## Sheldon Slaney

The three main priorities for the next round of negotiations should be the following: teacher allocation model, class size and salary. Teacher allocation should not be based on simply taking the number of students and dividing it by a predetermined number to create an allocation that will in turn work for every school. Allocation should not be based on funding but rather the needs of our students. Another priority should be class size. Students' needs are diverse and therefore, we need the government to recognize

that the ratio needs to result in more teachers supporting fewer students. This shift would provide teachers with more time to concentrate on meeting the needs of all their students in a consistent way. Finally, a priority for the next round of negotiations is salary. The cost of living increases yearly and our pay needs to minimally reflect this inflation.

## Russell Stockley

Without question there has to be a reduction in workload for teachers. The NLTA must ensure that teachers are not overburdened by school districts or government to attend other activities outside of the instructional day. We must keep workload expectations to the instructional day only.

Governments have taken teachers for granted. There has been a major publicity push on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals by governments. Still for all they have done nothing to help out their teachers. I believe the NLTA must negotiate a bank of non-discretionary wellness days that an individual can take when needed. Everyone needs an emotional break sometimes, especially teachers.

NL teachers are consistently some of the lowest paid within the country. Until the extension agreement teachers had not received a raise in over a decade. The cost of living continues to rise but teachers have to bear the brunt. We must negotiate a fair wage for teachers.

## Della Way

Workload, Communication, and Class size. Teachers are continuing to see demands being placed on them and we need to lobby on behalf of our teachers so they do not become mentally and physically exhausted. Teachers need an adequate workload to ensure the utmost quality of education is provided. Teachers see no monetary salary for additional hours spent outside of the workday and thus the expectation cannot be carried that they be required to do so. Teachers cannot be expected to pick up and work under varying conditions like we have seen in the past year. Teachers need an open communication channel with the district and department on the implementation of all strategies and the changes that are affecting the students in our classes. We need to keep pressure on government with campaigns like Class Size Matters so that our teachers can do their job to the best of their abilities.

## Sean Weir

In the next round of negotiations, I feel that the three main priorities should be:

- A) Class size and composition
- B) Sick Leave
- C) Teacher Wellness

## Question 4:

**Women currently account for approximately 74% of the NLTA membership. As well, the number of members who have joined the profession since September 1, 2006 (effective date of changes to sick leave provisions) is steadily growing. However, the current composition of Provincial Executive is not reflective of this reality. As a candidate, what do you think is needed to ensure fair representation of all NLTA members, including gender and generational equity?**

### Derrick Baker

To ensure fair representation of all NLTA members at Provincial Executive, policy changes need to be made at the association level regarding the structure and make up of the executive council. Similar to the MHAs we elect in each region of the province based on seats, our executive council could also be composed of seats, representing various regions of the province like western, central, Labrador, etc. and also include seats for gender and generational equity. In this manner, NLTA members wishing to run for executive council would then compete for a particular seat at the executive table. This method would prevent and eliminate, for example, a provincial executive made up of 3-4 members from the Avalon, and thus guarantee fair and equal representation across of all members.

### Lori Barry

In order to try and ensure fair representation of all NLTA members on the Provincial Executive I believe we need to start at the branch level, encouraging diversity in the branch membership. Branches need to ensure all positions are filled and be cognizant of multiplicity. When encouraging people to run for the executive, branches need to ensure that they support people with a variety of experience and background, being conscious of such things as gender and generation equity. The Provincial Executive could also make positions available specifically for certain representation such as substitute/new teachers, various school sizes similar to the large, medium and small school breakdown for the Education Action Plan and multi-grade schools.

### Clifford Budgell

As someone who was hired after September 1, 2006, I understand how it feels to be affected by the two-tier sick leave. The Association is starting to feel the effects of this issue, and as seen in the last two contract negotiations, equal sick leave has been added in the opening packages. To achieve more diverse representation, we need to get new members active in the Association, to bring forth their perspective about how they are affected by the contract. We've

been working hard in the Ganova Branch to get more teachers engaged with our events, because we believe that by getting more members involved, more ideas and opinions can be brought forward from this generation. In addition, to bring fair representation to the table, a possible change in the NLTA by-laws can be brought forward such that gender and generational representation will be prioritized.

### Hollis Cull

I believe this to be an easy fix. I believe that there should be a policy change that states that at least half of the executive positions be filled by women. When women make up the majority of the membership it only makes sense that they fill the leadership positions that are making decisions for them.

### Angela Dawe

This question begs a deep dive. This issue could be referred to the NLTA Equity Issues in Education Committee for greater scrutiny– with a report back to the membership on findings and suggestions. From the NLTA Provincial Executive, the history of NLTA Presidents, and the history of NLTA Executive Directors, we see these formalized leadership positions dominated by a very narrow (male) demographic. I am not one to subscribe to hiring someone because they fit a particular demographic to ensure a balanced representation; rather, I believe in actively encouraging and empowering demographics that are overtly under-represented. To debunk the notion of an “old boys club” at any level of leadership, diversity must be a top priority in devising and implementing a plan to attract and cultivate leaders to ensure equitable and fair representation of our membership.

### Derek Drover

Embracing diversity to be representative of its entire membership is indicative of the strength of any organization. While NLTA embraces equity and diversity, as articulated, for example, in the mandate of the Equity Issues in Education standing committee, there is always more to do to grow as an organization – such self-reflection is the hallmark of a

proactive professional Association such as the NLTA. The mandate of the Equity Committee provides, not only for monitoring, but also for promoting equity and diversity. Furthermore, NLTA committees policy (K.1.j) states, "With the approval of the Executive Council, standing committees of the Executive may establish 'ad hoc' groups as required and may delegate specific tasks which are properly the responsibility of the committee." To encourage and promote diverse leadership representation, the Association, via the Equity Committee/ad hoc committee, may initiate a review of applicable policies and by-laws, focus groups, and proactive leadership engagement programs.

## Stephanie Drover-Edmunds

Many women have expressed interest in becoming active within the NLTA, but feel they cannot commit to the Association because of their other obligations, roles, and responsibilities. The NLTA should highlight the importance of this majority group who occupy a minority leadership role, provide training on effective ways to mobilize them and encourage and support more gender and generational equity within NLTA leadership. NLTA should provide dedicated space where women and under-represented groups can voice their concerns, experiences, challenges and successes. Nationally, women's symposiums play a vital role in bringing women together to discuss their workplace realities and their place in their communities and society as a whole. That is something I think NLTA could explore to give greater voice to the 74%. We teach our students about empowerment, but we are so busy in our own lives, we forget about empowering ourselves. The time has come to remedy that.

## Darryl George

We must always strive to be as true a reflection of our membership as possible. A succession plan to ensure the NLTA leadership is representative of the gender and generational composition of our membership, along with all other groups, is a must.

The solutions for addressing these inequities are multi-faceted. We must be clear and resolute in supporting the goal of cultivating leadership that is a true reflection of our membership. Programs can be developed, such as the JCM Observer Program, that encourage members to get involved with the NLTA. Educational and professional development opportunities should be developed to lay a foundation for members to successfully transition into leadership roles. Current leaders can play a vital role in mentoring, guiding and encouraging members of diverse backgrounds to take on leadership roles. With equity of representation as a guiding principle, the goal of diverse representation will be realized!

## Kelly Loch

I am very pleased this year to see a wide range of teachers from many areas of this province offer themselves for Provincial Executive. To see six women on the ballot is an improvement! I have been approaching members and encouraging them to run for years now. While chair of the Equity Committee we looked at ways to encourage women to put their name on the ballot. I truly believe the issue of equity representation needs to be investigated as to what is beneficial for our organization structure. I would recommend that the new NLTA Equity Committee probe to ask relevant questions such as: "What are the governing structures in other teacher unions across Canada?"; "Are there designated seats for gender and generational teachers?" There needs to be an investigation completed and the findings brought back to the Provincial Executive and Joint Council for decision making before BGM 2023.

## Tracey Payne

As the Chair of the NLTA Equity Committee, I assure you that gender and generational equity has been a priority of the committee. It is at the forefront of this very important committee that I am honored to be a part of.

Low numbers of female representatives is not unique to the NLTA. There are just 7 MHAs out of 40 and there is 1 female out of 7 city councilors in Corner Brook.

Begin by surveying the membership to determine if there are any barriers. The answer needs to come from within. Ask the membership if they are interested in becoming involved in NLTA. The Association can encourage female members to become active in the Association by campaigning and promoting the involvement of female members. The Association can incorporate the use of more technology if some feel that the time away from family may be a possible barrier.

## Tyrone Power

Equitable representation within the Association at all levels is imperative to have equal voice. Several ways to address this issue is to a) have the Associate Director convene a forum for women to share their concerns and gather feedback on reasons why they are not involved and ways to help them become involved, b) provide access to childcare for individuals who wish to take part in Association business as childcare is often a contributing factor why they cannot attend, c) create Special Interest groups representing the diverse populations we have within the Association to hear their voice, and d) research what other jurisdictions have done to increase membership from individuals in diverse populations.

## Colin Short

Every effort is made to ensure that membership on Standing and Ad Hoc committees of the NLTA is representative of our members. In fact, when establishing our negotiating team, Provincial Executive considers twenty-four different criteria to ensure that gender, generational, geography, and different fields within our organization are represented. When it comes to Provincial Executive, it is different because this group is elected by the entire membership for President and Vice President and by BGM delegates for the remaining ten. Currently, any member in good standing can offer themselves for election. The current composition of Executive may not reflect the makeup of the overall membership. If I am re-elected I would lobby to have an Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform established to have a broad mandate to consider this issue, to find out why more members are not offering themselves or if this policy has to be amended.

## Sheldon Slaney

Presently, it is important to note that there has been growth with regards to females taking on leadership roles at both the staff and executive levels. However, while a discrepancy does exist, I believe it is again directly linked to membership engagement. It is not simply about male versus female executive members, but rather that all teachers need to feel connected to the decisions made by the elected executive and be actively engaged in the process. Therefore, we need to reach out to more female teachers, hear their voices, continue to share the Association's platforms and provide ways to create opportunities for involvement and leadership.

With regards to improving generational equity, I believe the inconsistency stems from the government's persistent antics to create segregation between experienced teachers and new teachers. It is essential that we fight as a unified association – not based on our years of service or the date one commences their career. We are all educated, dedicated and professional teachers who need to stand together as one.

## Russell Stockley

I believe our association has done a fantastic job encouraging teachers from various backgrounds to become active participants in association matters. However, it is still our duty to continue to grow and engage our membership, especially those from underrepresented demographic groups within our organization.

I believe this can be done most effectively through our various organizational branches within the NLTA. It is important to promote involvement in our local NLTA branches, provincial NLTA committees, various town halls as they become available as well as any Special

Interest Councils that one may have an interest to participate in. With many teachers connected through social media the NLTA must continue to use these platforms so that each and every teacher feels like they have a voice to contribute.

I know personally I have been involved in almost all of these and they have helped me shape the positive view that I hold of the NLTA today.

## Della Way

This is indeed an issue because females usually take on a different role within the family unit. Added to this is the fact that younger teachers are struggling with increased demands of preparing curriculum and finding their way in the school system. I feel that females, as well as young teachers, feel intimidated in taking on such roles and they need to be supported and encouraged by their colleagues. People need to be able to voice concerns and not feel as though they are "playing a card" to be heard. If a card is there to be played then it must represent a void and stigma should not be attached by people bringing up these issues. The NLTA needs to create a Kinder Start program to introduce new employees to the ins and outs of the Association. People see by doing and we could eliminate some of the intimidation with these introductory sessions.

## Sean Weir

Having been an NLTA member for over 20 years, I have no reason to suspect that I've ever received unfair representation by our elected leadership during that time.(Even when there was no Executive member from Labrador.) I trust that the individuals who put their names forward to serve on the Executive are considerate of all members' interests, seek out informed opinions, and make decisions accordingly. Executive members maintain regular contact with their respective Branch Presidents to discuss emergent issues, and all Committees of Executive have equity provisions in place when selecting its members. Unfortunately, the current electoral system for Provincial Executive provides no guarantee that the Executive's composition will mirror the demographics of the Association, and, with only ten positions available, it may not be possible. Certainly, if elected, I would be open to having an Association committee make recommendations as to how our electoral process can be more equitable.

## Question 5:

**As a member of the 2021–23 NLTA Provincial Executive, how would you seek to address the issues of class size and composition, and the resulting challenges faced by teachers in different grade levels and teaching assignments in meeting diverse learning needs in this context?**

### Derrick Baker

The issue of class size and composition can only be resolved by government putting more resources into the school system. Resources such as more teachers, more TLAs, more student assistants, more IRTs, etc. that would help classroom teachers to address and deal with the challenges and magnitude of diverse learning and behavioral needs in today's classroom. As an association, we must continue to lobby government and the general public to reinforce this need and continue to advocate for increased resources in the educational system, in any way we can. We have been doing an excellent job so far and must continue to do so in the future. Increased media campaigns like Class Size Matters and Teachers Change Lives were very effective in gaining public support and highlighting the increased needs and demands in the classroom. This must continue.

### Lori Barry

Class size has become a very significant issue in our schools. Many of us have experienced this struggle, especially trying to meet the needs of the diverse learner in this context. I believe we need to fight for a needs-based system and not numbers based. Each classroom is different and each child is different and there is no cookie cutter solution that will suit all classrooms. We need to visit classroom composition and ensure that classrooms are created with the best interest of all children in mind. I believe that an increase in the allocation of IRTs will help support the classroom teacher and help with meeting needs of diverse learners. I also feel that the cap on teacher allocations needs to be a hard cap and that appeals or adjustments need to be made before the start of the school year. Also, the permanent substitute teacher that was allocated to some schools this year was a great asset to be maintained for ALL schools.

### Clifford Budgell

First, I would make sure that class size and composition is a key issue that is included in the opening packages for negotiation. Typically, this is seen as an issue by many teachers and is one of the top priorities of the Association. Second, we need to encourage the continuation of the campaign about class sizes that has been occurring the last two years, and consider expanding its reach. This campaign had many students, parents, and teachers talking. It also

brought up conversations in the provincial legislation. The pandemic has taken a toll on all of us, and due to this, classroom size and composition has not been the foremost issue for teachers, but it has to be brought back as a priority issue. Lastly, I would continue to fight for the review of the teacher allocation model that was promised by the government.

### Hollis Cull

This issue needs to be at the forefront of our membership. Some classes at the junior and senior high levels are way above the number set out in caps. Combine that with COVID-19 restrictions, the number of students that are in close proximity is way too high. Why are the class sizes so high or caps not being adhered to is a question that needs to be answered and held to. Larger schools are dealing with cap size and smaller schools are dealing with multi-aging and multi-grading and in both situations, meeting the needs of all learners in the context of class size and composition is becoming a more and more arduous task. We need to advocate for a more reasonable cap size given all the complexities that students present with today and then we need to ensure it is a hard cap! Education must be a priority in our society and those who deliver it must be funded adequately. Teachers deserve no less. I would lend my voice to this issue loudly and clearly.

### Angela Dawe

Every student deserves to have:

- an education, success, and to be celebrated
- their mental health needs addressed and accommodated
- teachers that understand their history, strengths, and needs
- behavioural supports when needed
- a classroom where they feel safe
- extra support when needed

Every teacher deserves to feel that they can adequately do their job.

With current class size coupled with the diversity and complexity of needs – teachers are faced with stress, burnout, and feelings of frustration/inadequacy. Aside from class size, a wider scale of professionals are needed to address the critical deficits. Fulfilling the role of teacher, counsellor, social worker, life coach, security guard, and student assistant is not sustainable, healthy, or fair to anyone involved.

Angelou: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

We know better. Therefore, we must demand better. Our cargo is precious. Our calling is rich. Our advocacy efforts must not let us grow weary.

## Derek Drover

As members of provincial executive, it is our duty and responsibility to advocate relentlessly on behalf of our members. The very significant and persistent issues of class size and composition and the concomitant chronic challenges and stressors placed on our members remain at the forefront while attempting to meet the diverse learning needs of our students in very demanding teaching and learning contexts where the resources provided do not suffice to meet the expectations placed on our members. To address these issues, the Association must pursue relentlessly an independent review of the teacher allocation model by holding government accountable to comply with the 2011 cabinet directive to review the implementation of the 2008 teacher allocation model. Further, the Association must continue to pursue improvements to class size, composition, and workload through the collective bargaining process, as were delineated in Article 30 of the most recent set of NLTA provincial proposals.

## Stephanie Drover-Edmunds

We, as teachers, are aware of the impact class size and composition are having on students and teachers. We have a theoretical inclusive education system where teachers struggle to deliver curricula to students who themselves are struggling to learn because their needs are so diverse and the necessary human resources are just not there to cope with the demand. It is a statistical fact that larger class sizes have a measurable negative impact on student learning, yet successive governments have treated education as a budget line, refusing to address the problem of overcrowded classrooms. In fact, many of the recommendations of the 2017 Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes have been shelved or ignored. It is time to finally get an independent review completed, one that will be followed when recommendations are rendered. No more wasting money on optics. In the words of Dr. David Dibbon, "It's About Time!"

## Darryl George

The research on class size is very clear. Smaller class size has a significant positive impact on student learning, engagement, retention, and educational advancement in post-secondary. The NLTA has done an effective job of educating and lobbying stakeholders on this topic through its "Class Size Matters" campaign. We must continue to build upon this success. This will require a multi-pronged approach. One where we continue to

inform and influence, while at the same time working to entrench class size provisions in the collective agreement.

Likewise, we must take a multifaceted approach to ensure that our diverse classrooms have adequate resourcing. All of our classrooms require supports in terms of teacher assistants, student assistants, instructional resource teachers, guidance counsellors, itinerant teachers and the like. We must maintain and, in fact, grow these supports. This can only be accomplished through effective public campaigns, lobbying decision makers and through the collective bargaining process.

## Kelly Loch

All three political parties have publicly stated that if elected, they will commit to a review of the Teacher Allocation Model. This is overdue and we must keep vigilant to ensure this review happens. We have been doing much work around student social and emotional learning. We have been encouraged to incorporate this in daily life and learning. But where is the curriculum for this? It is time for a full review of the curriculum in this province. If students' strengths and challenges are so diverse, why are we placing them in a "grade"? Why do we have subjects when we have been incorporating various subject topics in our core subject areas? There should be a diverse learning continuum with updated values and skills for students to achieve and teachers must have input into this. We need a team approach to teaching and learning by teachers.

## Tracey Payne

I would seek to address the issues of class size and composition by having these issues as part of the collective agreement. The class size and composition concerns need to be addressed in the opening package in the next round of negotiations. Teachers in BC have class size and class composition in their collective agreement and we should strive to have it included into ours as well.

The severe needs of students need to be counted as more than one student when determining the allocations and class size. A class of 30 students with no severe needs is nothing like a class of 25 students with 5 students who have severe needs. The composition of the class must be taken into account when determining the class size. A student with severe needs should count as three or four students. The demands being placed on teachers must be reasonable.

## Tyrone Power

In order to meet these challenges, there has to be a) a focus placed upon meeting teacher qualifications with teaching assignments to the best of the ability of school, particularly in those subject areas requiring specializations, b) improving Professional Development and Learning for teachers who have students with

exceptionalities and students with diverse backgrounds – this could include developing ongoing partnerships with community groups who can provide ongoing support to teachers (i.e. First Light would be a great addition for Indigenous students) and c) reducing the Guidance Counsellor student ratio to 250–1. Given the diverse needs and class compositions in today’s schools, class sizes must be reduced to allow teachers time to focus on the multiple needs in their classes. Adequate class sizes would be K–3 (15), 4–6 (20) and 7–12 (25).

## Colin Short

Class size and class composition is arguably the most important issue NLTA is facing today, after the COVID–19 pandemic. Our “Class Size Matters” button and postcard campaigns were gaining a lot of traction and support before COVID–19. All political party leaders have committed to an independent review of the Teacher Allocation formula. This may help alleviate some of the issues. Ultimately, there have to be hard class cap numbers in all grades and subject areas, reflective of students’ needs. One size will not fit all. This has to be realized with intense lobbying efforts through our usual channels with both school boards. This issue would have to be addressed through collective bargaining in the next round of contract negotiations, but we do not have to wait because we can always negotiate Memorandums of Agreement to address specific issues and this issue is too important not to pursue.

## Sheldon Slaney

We need to establish liaisons with the government and our students’ parents/guardians so that we can more effectively demonstrate to both parties the negative impact of class size and composition on our students. Teachers on a daily basis see first hand this negative impact – on our teaching as well as the academic, social and emotional well-being of our students. Teachers make it work – that’s what we do, and it is often to the detriment of our own personal health. We need parents/guardians to partner with us so that the government recognizes it’s not just a matter of teachers complaining about workload, but instead, a united alliance that wants to see change for the betterment of all parties involved. As an executive we should be educating parents about the impacts of class size and composition and in turn use this shared perspective as a way to lobby the government to have them re-evaluate their policies. We have tried to combat this issue independently, but it does not and should not have to be a battle we fight alone.

## Russell Stockley

Overcrowded classrooms with limited human resources in the form of IRTs and other supports are making it challenging to address the needs of students. The inclusion model has resulted in teachers having to

create individualized lessons for students based upon their learning styles and needs. These are impossible tasks for one teacher to do alone.

I wholeheartedly believe it is imperative to have a review of the Teacher Allocation Model. Many of the recommendations from the 2007 report were either loosely addressed or not addressed at all. We all know that these situations have not gotten better over time but still governments have failed to address these issues. Teachers are tired and overworked. The allocation model must be amended to create hard caps on class sizes in all of the K–12 sectors as well as a consistent allocation of IRTs and other human supports based upon the identified exceptionalities within their classrooms.

## Della Way

The allocation model needs to be revised. The model, as it is, is not working to meet student needs. Of utmost concern is the implementation of new strategies and ideologies without adequate resources. Every year students are placed within our classrooms without adequate supports and teachers are expected to make it work. Teachers need to be able to tell stories so that the governing bodies can get a clear representation of what is actually happening within our classrooms. We need to stop this idealization that teachers will make it work. Teachers need to open up a communication channel to the District and Department so that teachers can have a say. Teachers need to be a voice for themselves and we need to be able to speak up for the negative impact that these decisions are having on the education of all our students.

## Sean Weir

Class size and composition are contributing factors to other issues, like teacher workload and teacher wellness, which our members have identified as being priorities for them. Today, many students come to school with a myriad of issues that our members try to address, or, at the very least, manage. Wearing “multiple hats” in my small school actually gives me great insight into the struggles that my colleagues in larger schools must encounter during their daily practice. By virtue of my teaching position, I know “how” things are supposed to operate in today’s crowded classrooms at most grade levels, but, in speaking to my provincial colleagues, I also know the “reality” of today’s under-staffed schools. Prior to the election, the NLTA secured commitments from the major political parties to undergo an independent review of the Teacher Allocation Model. The new Executive must ensure that this promise is kept.