



Responses to Questions Posed to Executive Candidates

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Provincial Executive Candidate Question Responses

Question 1. How do you feel about the NLTA's presence and messaging in the public media, particularly in light of recent concerns regarding parent/student social media postings? What are we doing right and what needs to change?

IAN ADEY

I believe the NLTA is moving in the right direction with some of its social media campaigns; however, there seems to be a significant disconnect with teachers who are experiencing the realities mentioned by the Association in those campaigns. Our Association needs to be more vocal and direct in its messaging. We should stop being overly compromising and instead adopt a more confrontational stance with the government and the media. Teachers need to feel assured that the Association is supporting them and advocating for their interests. Many members feel abandoned by their Association.

HOLLIS CULL

I feel it was very appropriate to put out a message to the public condemning the abuse of teachers. The tone and exasperation in the voice-over came across as genuine and authentic. I believe the vast majority of the public saw through the protests as being parents not taking responsibility for their children's behaviour. We are living in a society where everyone thinks that it is their right to destroy someone publicly without going through the proper channels. That is what needs to change; the public being made aware of how to express their concerns legitimately. If that is the message that needs to be continually reiterated by the NLTA, then so be it.

ANGELA DAWE

While I am aware that due to privacy and potential legal implications, individual cases can not be commented on directly, I believe that a regular stream of communication needs to be provided to all members to provide assurance that there is action and support occurring for the affected members of the affected schools/communities. We are living in a time wherein everyone has a means of spouting untruths, misinformation, and, unfortunately, vitriol. It is at this very time that we need to depend on the leaders in our Association to rise above and ensure that the correct information is being disseminated and promoted to the membership and to the public at large. I very much appreciated the most recent campaign, and in that vein, I would also like to see the NLTA exert pressure on the employer to step up their leadership in supporting its employees in the public eye.

STEPHANIE DROVER-EDMUNDS

In response to the recent social media attacks towards schools and teachers, the NLTA increased its media presence, addressing the critical educational issues and advocating for members' rights. The current radio responses have been well-developed and impactful and have demonstrated a greater commitment to supporting

teachers. This momentum needs to continue. The NLTA must remain proactive and visible, expanding year-round radio ads and fostering public engagement to promote transparency. Highlighting both the challenges and rewards of being a teacher will provide a complete picture of the province's educational landscape. Media interviews addressing pressing concerns should be prioritized to amplify the teachers' voices and increase awareness about the realities in education. While EAP services are helpful, they cannot fully address these stressful situations. Members require guidance to protect themselves and their families. The NLTA should provide clear information about safety, self-protection, and legal rights at the start of each school year.

MARIE-CHANTAL HURLEY

The NLTA has effectively advocated on key issues such as class size, resource allocation, and student needs, while working to counter misinformation and amplify teachers' voices. However, stronger action is needed to address the vilification of educators on social media and in public discourse. Teacher morale is declining, with many feeling undervalued, overworked, and experiencing compassion fatigue. Greater transparency and direct communication regarding the Association's media strategy would help restore confidence in its advocacy. Currently, public sentiment ranges from neutrality to outright disdain for the profession. A strategic, coordinated effort to engage parents and the public in fostering understanding rather than division is essential. Teachers are unfairly blamed for systemic issues beyond their control, much like cashiers being berated over grocery prices. Redirecting public frustration toward the provincial government's chronic underfunding through clear, targeted campaigns would be a crucial step in shifting the narrative.

NICOLE LEWIS

I believe the precedence and messaging that the NLTA has been presenting to the media is incredibly important, especially at this moment. There seems to be an increasing amount of erroneous information directed toward teachers on social media, and the NLTA's strong stance in defending us is paramount right now. Unfortunately, the public often lacks respect for teachers and feels it is appropriate to use social media platforms as a way to air their grievances. With the NLTA using a social media campaign to address these concerns, they are able to effectively reach and engage their target audience, helping to shift the narrative and offer much-needed support for educators. The employer should take a more active approach in supporting teachers in the public.

PATRICK MURPHY

The response and messaging were prompt, professional and consistent. Engaging in negative posts on social media does not help us as individuals or as an Association. We should continue to avoid doing such things even if personally we are tempted to defend ourselves; let the NLTA be our collective voice. The NLTA should continue to support those who reach out when they are threatened or accused of wrongdoing. Also, the union could communicate more to the membership that such efforts are being made for those individuals so that the perception that we have to deal with this on our own can be decreased. Collectively, we need to promote positive interactions of school culture and the achievements of our students and schools.

TRACEY PAYNE

We must continue to have a presence in all streams of public media. We must continue our media campaigns such as Invest in our Kids, Teachers Change Lives, Class Size Matters Now More Than Ever, etc. We need to continue to advocate for NO violence in our schools. The NLTA needs to continue to partner with the RNC, RCMP, social workers, and other agencies to eliminate violence in our schools. The school should be a safe place for all students, teachers and staff.

RUSSELL STOCKLEY

The current public relations campaign issued from the NLTA of “I Stand With Our Teachers” was important to launch in an effort to demonstrate to teachers that what has been happening online is totally unacceptable. Working in the public service is especially difficult in this day and age. Regardless of this, teachers deserve to have their rights, and most importantly, their dignity respected by the public. In these unprecedented times, the Association was on point in the launch of this campaign. To address the situation, we as a society must educate our students on the importance of respectful discourse. If we are not going to get that from the adults, then we have to at least teach the adults of our future—our students—how one should behave in both the general public as well as how we engage with others both personally and professionally on social media.

DELLA WAY

I believe that the NLTA’s presence in public media is essential in advocating for teachers, but the messaging could be more proactive and engaging, rather than reactive and defensive. While the association has done well in addressing key education issues, especially in the Teachers Change Lives campaign, there is room for improvement in how it responds to concerns arising from parent and student social media posts. A stronger, more visible stance in clarifying misconceptions and supporting teachers in real-time would be beneficial and totally worth the cost. I strongly believe that the association needs to use this avenue to highlight the struggles and realities that exist within our classrooms as well. Moving forward, we must amplify positive narratives about education in our schools but also paint a more realistic picture for the public.

Question 2. What are your thoughts on current teacher staffing processes in the K-12 public education system? Should factors such as seniority, university credentials, experience, etc. play more or less of a role? What changes to staffing rules, if any, do you think the NLTA should advocate for and/or attempt to achieve through collective bargaining?

IAN ADEY

I believe the NLTA should advocate for the elimination of the pool system for interviews. We work in an environment where we recognize that students can have a bad day or may not perform at their best, and we provide them with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge. However, we allow our employer to subjectively rate and rank us based on a single day's assessment. I have heard too many stories of teachers whose chances for employment were ruined because they had a bad day or made a mistake during one interview.

HOLLIS CULL

I don't think that just because you have tenure, you can automatically apply for a position and get it. I believe that you should still be interviewed for the position and if another candidate does a better interview, it needs to be considered. I believe that if you have been substituting for a number of years that your service should also qualify you. If an administrator can write a reference letter advocating for tenure for a long-term substitute that does an exemplary job, why should the substitute be left struggling to be tenured? It is easy to say, "just move and get your tenure," but extenuating circumstances, like growing families, healthcare needs, caring for elderly parents, divorce where visitation rights need to be adhered to for children, paying a mortgage and then rent elsewhere, etc., are all legitimate reasons for teachers and that should be respected.

ANGELA DAWE

At BGM 2023, this was a sensitive issue with strong voices on each side of the debate. Personally, I believe that a balance of credentials, continuing education, experience, and demonstrated success need to trump seniority hiring as it currently exists. It is unfortunate that the years of nepotism, favouritism, and strategic advertising/hiring has helped pave the path to narrowing the selection of a successful candidate down to a university degree/major/minor and years of service. Just as Administrators do not have to have a Master's in Educational Leadership to be an effective leader, I believe teachers' backgrounds, experience, and degrees need to have the same grace as administrators, in this regard. I would like to see experience account for merit in collective bargaining. Further to this, I would also like to see teachers being an active part of the appraisal process for Administrators through collective bargaining.

STEPHANIE DROVER-EDMUNDS

The NLTA should consistently advocate for a fair, transparent staffing system that values educators' qualifications, experience, and contributions. Staffing decisions must follow an unbiased, structured approach. To address teacher concerns, the NLTA could host informational sessions, fostering dialogue about the staffing process. Seniority and qualifications—including master's degrees, diplomas, and certifications from recognized institutions—should remain central to decision-making. Substitute teachers, recent graduates, and educators transferring from other provinces or countries with valid teaching certificates should undergo the same evaluation criteria. Professional learning opportunities complimenting work experience can also be emphasized. The NLTA might propose adding a dedicated section to the teacher profile portal to track completed professional learning throughout their career. This feature would enhance visibility into educators' ongoing development and support their current roles. Advocacy for such measures ensures a comprehensive system that upholds fairness, reflecting the diverse skills and experience within the teaching profession throughout the hiring process.

MARIE-CHANTAL HURLEY

While the staffing situation at the CSFP differs from that of NLSchools, both follow similar criteria. University credentials and accreditations are essential, but relying solely on them is a misstep. Experience in the field often proves more valuable, directly enhancing teaching competency. Seniority also matters—when candidates are equally suited, it should remain a deciding factor. However, staffing must be equitable, transparent, and prioritize teacher well-being and student success. For specialized and leadership roles, as well as positions requiring expertise in special education or linguistic abilities—particularly in French-language and immersion settings—accreditation should be a prerequisite. A balanced approach valuing both qualifications and practical experience is crucial to a fair, effective staffing system.

NICOLE LEWIS

I believe that the NLTA needs to address the hiring practices regarding retired teachers who have taught outside the province and then return to work, often bypassing regular and retired substitutes who have only taught within the province. This practice allows out-of-province teachers to take precedence over those who have faithfully paid union dues and contributed to the pension plan throughout their careers in the province. Such a system seems inequitable and undermines the contributions of teachers who have dedicated their careers to educating within the province.

PATRICK MURPHY

If the staffing processes worked effectively, there would be less of a problem with teacher shortages. Most teacher shortages fall in rural or remote areas of our province. Greater compensation is needed to retain teachers in rural areas and to deal with the high living costs. The NLTA could stress the need for the community at large to attain their certificate III (6.10 in the Collective Agreement) to help with emergency staffing. For hiring, it is always important to take the experience and credentials of a prospective teacher into account for a position. When it comes to filling administration positions, seniority should be key. Newer teachers may not always have the skills needed to navigate the multifaceted decision-making process many admin have to face on a daily basis. Seasoned teachers, with their experience and connections, often are able to intuitively make a sound decision on such matters.

TRACEY PAYNE

Seniority, experience and university credentials should play a role in staffing. In hard-to-fill positions, equivalency should definitely be considered. The requirement for positions to have a double major is totally unrealistic and unnecessary. The major should be enough to fill the requirement to teach a particular course. In a hard-to-fill position, a minor should also be accepted and not just the major.

I feel that there should be a permanent substitute placed in every school in the province depending upon their size.

RUSSELL STOCKLEY

During the 2016–2020 contract negotiations, the NLTA were finally able to secure seniority transfer for permanent teachers under Article 6.11 of the Collective Agreement. This was highly desired by the membership, and it also, in the short term, helped fill vacant permanent positions that have been difficult to fill, or went unfilled in years past. This gain in the collective agreement has benefited much of the membership with varying levels of accrued seniority.

Through the hard work of the Substitute Teacher Committee, they have passed an advisory motion to consider substitute seniority in the next round of collective bargaining. This would help progress not only the rights of substitute teachers through collective bargaining but also show them the respect that they deserve as professionals to have their seniority acknowledged now, instead of when they become permanent, if ever. Substitute seniority should be considered on replacement and permanent advertisements.

DELLA WAY

The current teacher staffing process in the K-12 system requires a balanced approach between seniority, qualifications, and experience. While seniority ensures job security, it should not overshadow merit and suitability for specific roles. We cannot forget university credentials but more needs to be done to advocate for valid experience in specific subjects and courses, rather than blanket placement because of limited exposure to subjects and courses. For example, teaching Science in Grade 8 does not qualify a teacher to deliver Physics 3204 curriculum. That said, experience is valuable and right now with recruitment and retention being such an issue, we need to look at it more within hiring practices. With a commitment for continuous learning, teachers with experience should be given permanent positions.

Question 3. What strategies do you think would be most effective to help improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador? Should advocacy and bargaining efforts focus on improving working and living conditions, on increasing compensation and other financial incentives, or on a mix of both?

IAN ADEY

The NLTA should explore various options to enhance recruitment efforts. One consideration is to reassess our view on what is classified as sick leave. I believe that pregnant people are negatively impacted by classifying all leaves related to pregnancy as “sick leave.” We need to advocate against this discrimination and work towards categorizing any leave associated with pregnancy differently. Teachers should not have to use their limited sick leave for pregnancy-related reasons. Addressing this issue would help eliminate a significant barrier and source of stress for many new teachers in our system.

Additionally, we must seek ways to increase compensation for extracurricular work that teachers undertake. We often hear about the importance of activities outside of school hours, yet there is little to no compensation for those efforts. No other professional organization in this province is expected to work beyond their regular hours without pay.

HOLLIS CULL

Focusing on improving living and working conditions is indeed more important than ever. Ensuring that teachers have a place to stay is very important and perhaps a stipend can help cover expenses. It is important that they have reliable internet access. Young teachers are much more likely to be involved in technology/gaming so it is important to them to have this access. Perhaps offering positions to couples so that they are together rather than 500 km apart would help it, or even people that are close friends may be offered positions in close proximity to each other, so they have a support system and can connect with each other on weekends, at the very least.

ANGELA DAWE

Well, this is a loaded question. The challenges of recruitment and retention can be traced right back to the K-12 journey for students. Students are regularly seeing/hearing of teachers (some of which are parents/guardians/neighbours/family friends) burn out, be physically and emotionally assaulted, beg for resources, pay out of pocket for supplies, advocate for positive change within the system that doesn't happen, pour their time/energy in a volunteer capacity into extra-curricular activities, get lambasted on social media by a sect of society, and struggle with the cost of living – especially in remote areas of the province. To change the trajectory of recruitment and retention, we need to prove to students that this is a rewarding, lucrative, and satisfying career that boasts of an enjoyable work/life balance. To start, we need fierce advocacy and aggressive bargaining tactics directly tied to improving our working and living conditions.

STEPHANIE DROVER-EDMUNDS

Improving the recruitment and retention of certified teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both working and living conditions, while offering competitive financial incentives. Employers should consider enhancing salaries, providing additional bonuses, grants, and subsidies, as well as increasing allowances for expenses such as travel, housing, groceries, and utilities. Ensuring job security, fostering professional development through teacher-student collaboration, and prioritizing classroom safety, mental health, and overall well-being are also essential. Programs for tuition reimbursement should be available to support new teachers and those seeking further certification. Assigning an NLTA member or staff representative whom teachers can collaborate with and turn to during escalated situations is critical. This ensures teachers feel heard, safe, respected, and validated. Hiring permanent replacement teachers and offering financial incentives to experienced teachers with over ten years in the field to temporarily fill difficult-to-staff positions can further strengthen retention efforts.

MARIE-CHANTAL HURLEY

Through my work with the CCFLP and CTF, I have observed the competitive efforts of other provinces in recruiting and retaining teachers. Given that we are competing nationally for educators, we must offer comparable incentives. Several key measures promoted by teacher unions elsewhere should be seriously considered in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Notably, NL remains the only province without a formal mentorship program for new teachers. Additionally, in most jurisdictions, lunch duty is covered by paid staff or volunteers, and guaranteed preparation time per cycle—often allocated daily—is standard. Wage increases elsewhere have also outpaced those in NL, making it imperative that we match or exceed these adjustments. Securing two additional sick days would be another significant step toward improving teacher well-being and aligning with national standards. Addressing these gaps would strengthen retention, attract new educators, and ensure NL remains competitive in the evolving educational landscape.

NICOLE LEWIS

I believe that the NLTA should prioritize retaining the teachers we already have as the first step in its recruitment efforts. Many educators feel undervalued and unsupported by their employer, which has significantly impacted job satisfaction. A common sentiment among teachers is frustration with working conditions that are perceived as subpar largely due to a lack of resources, and

a general sense of being disregarded in terms of respect for their professional expertise and efforts. The recent loss of severance pay has been the breaking point for many, further eroding the trust and loyalty that educators feel towards the system. For many teachers, the continuous strain of having to face criticism, negativity, and harassment from the public without adequate backing or defense from their employer is contributing to a growing sense of discouragement. This creates a toxic work environment, making it increasingly difficult to attract and retain passionate, dedicated individuals in the profession.

PATRICK MURPHY

Making teachers feel safe and valued in their buildings and communities would go a long way to helping with retention, as that is a major issue for stress and low morale among our members. Finding effective ways to deal with workload issues and violence in schools and online is paramount. Teachers need to know their service, work and sacrifice of personal time matters. People are willing to work hard when they know such efforts are respected. The NLTA would do well to work in more clauses like the Wellness Day, mental health leave days and obligate the employer to strictly enforce consequences for students and the public who harm the well-being of their teachers. Safety matters more than money in the long run.

TRACEY PAYNE

In order to recruit and retain teachers in this province, you must improve the working and living conditions in the province. There must be recruitment incentives and retention incentives for teachers in NL. Health care workers such as doctors get in excess of \$100,000 in recruitment bonuses and social workers in isolated areas get a \$50,000 bonus for signing a two-year contract. Such incentives should be given to teachers.

The class size should not be greater than 15 in Kindergarten and 25 in Grades 1-12, class composition must be considered when determining class size, adequate resources must be in place for teachers to do their jobs, and classrooms and schools must be safe places for the teachers as well as the students.

There needs to be fewer initiatives from the DOE so teachers can get the appropriate PL prior to various initiatives rolling out.

RUSSELL STOCKLEY

Before the 2022-26 Collective Agreement was signed, teachers went many years without receiving any financial compensation from the employer. This is in stark contrast to the cost of living and its continual increase during each quarterly update. To curb these ever-continuing costs, teachers must be compensated equally (if not better), if we hope to attract and retain teachers in future years.

The diversity and complex needs of classrooms are further increasing, yet the employer has always retorted to a budget-based system of education instead of a need-based approach. Teachers are asked to do too much with too few resources. The mental exhaustion and burnout has caused teachers to leave the

profession. The NLTA must continue to strongly advocate for IRT, School Counsellor, TLA and SA positions to be allocated on a need-based, and not a numbers-based approach. Without changes, the recruitment challenges will no doubt continue.

DELLA WAY

Improving teacher recruitment and retention in this province requires a balanced approach to address both working conditions and financial incentives. Competitive salaries and benefits are essential to attracting teachers and keeping those we have. Teachers need supports to allow them to relocate and live in an era where the cost of living has been raised substantially in recent years and the compensation in salary is not keeping pace. Offering housing incentives, relocation assistance in advance, and loan forgiveness for teachers in hard-to-fill positions could make the profession more appealing. However, improving working conditions—such as class sizes, better resources, and supports to deal with increased classroom dynamics and violence is needed to increase long-term retention. We need to focus on reducing workload stress, ensuring guaranteed prep time so work stays at work, and enhancing mental health supports for educators. Teachers need a work/life balance; personally and financially.

Question 4. What measures do you think could help to improve membership engagement in and understanding of collective bargaining processes? If elected to the 2025–27 Provincial Executive, how would you work to build trust and confidence in our union and foster solidarity to push for meaningful and substantial compensation increases and improvements to working conditions?

IAN ADEY

The traditional approach to meet-and-greet events is no longer effective. As a member of the Humber Branch, we have explored various strategies to increase local membership participation, but none have proven successful. I believe we need to leverage technology to better engage our members. One example is the NLTA Teacher Voice Facebook group, which allowed many members to express their opinions. While the group had its flaws, I suggest that the association consider revamping it. This time, we should have dedicated moderators to answer questions and oversee discussions. Effective moderation is essential for the success of such groups. By improving this platform, we can foster more active participation in the bargaining process.

HOLLIS CULL

For membership, I think we should engage through multiple channels like email, social media, and newsletters and provide relevant and timely information, and seek feedback and input and acknowledge membership accomplishments and achievements. The secretary in our school receives a turkey at Christmas from her union; you'd be surprised how jealous we all are of her. Letting the employer know before we even begin negotiating that our most crucial demands are not negotiable and that we are willing to take job action for them will let them know how serious we are. We have the funds to put our membership on the street, and if that's what it takes, I think we should strike. Once parents' lives are disrupted with them having to secure child-care, we'll be in the driver's seat!

ANGELA DAWE

It's apparent that many members are ingesting and processing information much differently than historic practice. Many people are now drawn to short blurbs packed with info in as few words as possible or short, snappy videos. I believe the NLTA has to cater to a new way of educating, informing, and uniting our membership through a dedicated project. More than ever, division is the norm in society, as is unknowingly spreading misinformation, sharing information out of context, and general mistrust of decision-making bodies. To combat this, I believe the NLTA needs to champion a balance of sharing more detailed information that has the necessary context built in, and provide more detailed updates, without compromising strategic measures, during collective bargaining. Many members are not interested in attending branch meetings, running for elected leadership positions, nor are they interested in reading emails or the Bulletin, so a different approach is needed.

STEPHANIE DROVER-EDMUNDS

Hosting monthly virtual and/or in person sessions around the collective bargaining processes. The NLTA could provide a clearly organized Question & Answer calendar that identifies the times, topics, and who will be leading the question and answer sessions regarding the processes, fostering dialogue and address concerns directly. This safe environment would provide opportunities for teachers' voices to be heard. Allowing members to focus on what matters most to them at that particular time. Knowing that the NLTA is listening actively and openly could rebuild trust. Continuing with the regular updates, accessible resources, and having NLTA staff visit schools; amplifying members' voices and ensuring their concerns are reflected in the NLTA bargaining process can strengthen confidence. Solidarity grows when members feel united in purpose, so organizing events that celebrate shared goals and achievements could be impactful. To push for better compensation and working conditions, a unified front is essential. Mobilizing members, leveraging public support, and negotiating with clear, evidence-based demands can make a difference.

MARIE-CHANTAL HURLEY

Teacher apathy is high, with many experiencing burnout and compassion fatigue. Social media is an underutilized tool that can help engage teachers. We need quick, digestible updates—bullet-point summaries that are easily shareable and require minimal effort to access.

Teachers are stretched thin and have little bandwidth for additional meetings. Providing clear, frequent updates on union initiatives and bargaining progress would reduce confusion and keep members informed without adding stress.

A targeted campaign to educate newer teachers on the value of union membership and collective action is essential. Additionally, we should offer clear dissemination packets for school representatives to present at staff meetings, ensuring consistent communication across schools. This approach would help increase engagement and foster solidarity, allowing teachers to stay informed and involved without overwhelming them.

NICOLE LEWIS

As an educator who has been actively involved with the NLTA since the early stages of my career, I am deeply convinced of the immense value for all teachers, particularly younger ones, to become engaged with the NLTA. Being part of such an organization provides essential representation and support. Through roles like NLTA School Representatives and Special Interest

Councils, teachers gain a deeper understanding of the NLTA's pivotal role in their professional lives. By connecting educators to a vast network of resources, advocacy, and professional development, our Association empowers teachers to overcome challenges, advocate for their rights, and cultivate a strong sense of solidarity within the teaching community.

PATRICK MURPHY

Much of the language of the Collective Bargaining document and the minutes of meetings is written in a format unfamiliar to most, regardless of whether or not they are teachers. Members of the Executive Committee and Branch Presidents/Vice Presidents ought to make sure news is presented in varied formats (written and verbal), so that all members can easily engage and be up to date with the current material and issues. This could be easily disseminated at staff meetings or informal encounters throughout the school day. If elected, I would work towards making sure members are heard for their concerns and that this feedback is directed towards the Collective Bargaining team. This information can be strategically used to focus on the most pressing needs of our membership such as working conditions and compensation.

TRACEY PAYNE

We must ask our members to get involved in the collective bargaining process by putting their name forward for the Collective Bargaining Committee or showing interest in being on the negotiating team. Survey the membership to determine their most important items for the opening proposals and what they would like to see in the collective agreement. Offer virtual sessions so members can gain knowledge of the collective bargaining process. Members must realize that nothing is free, we need to fight to keep what we already have and understand that we could possibly lose things in the agreement.

Membership engagement cannot be measured by numbers at a meeting. For some, engagement may mean simply reading The Bulletin. For others it may be running for office, being involved in a SIC, etc. Let us not judge engagement by one measure. Many people are engaged to the level that they want to be.

RUSSELL STOCKLEY

Membership engagement has been a hotly debated topic ever since I have been involved with the NLTA. Our 47 local branches of the NLTA are instrumental in getting people involved in the business of the NLTA. Many branch presidents often become our provincial leaders on the elected Executive Council. Engagement must begin with our early career teachers and getting them to understand the importance of attending local branch meetings. The branches provide strong leadership in local issues and form important Branch Executives which tackle local issues within their branch. Branch Presidents also liaise with provincial executives through Joint Councils on the provincial business of the organization. Branches send delegates to BGM, which is the highest level of the NLTA hierarchy in decision-making, the most important area of our Association. Getting well-attended branch meetings would be a start.

DELLA WAY

To boost membership engagement in collective bargaining, the NLTA must prioritize clear, consistent communication. We must be proactive. Regular updates via social media and newsletters can keep members informed and involved. We need to develop webinars so that people understand the process. Hosting workshops and Q&A sessions regularly on bargaining processes would also help members better understand their role and impact.

If elected to the 2025-27 Provincial Executive, I would focus on strengthening trust by actively listening to members, advocating for their concerns, and ensuring transparency in decision-making. A united front is essential to securing substantial compensation increases and improved working conditions. This united front definitely needs to be worked on within the NLTA. We must be visible. We must get out and engage with our colleagues—it has been very effective in the past and can be again.

Question 5. Violent/aggressive student behaviour, lack of accountability, and inadequate human resources to meet increasing student needs are concerning and have a significant impact on working conditions and workload. What type of action is needed and what systemic change(s) do you think the Association should be advocating for to address these issues?

IAN ADEY

The NLTA needs to reallocate resources to investigate and follow up with administration and the Department regarding reported cases of violence and aggression towards teachers. Teachers require advocates on their behalf in this process. Additionally, teachers must be encouraged to report violent and aggressive actions to the RCMP and RNC. We need to elevate this issue, so it is not concealed within the school system. Our violence tracker on the NLTA website is insufficient. Teachers should know who to contact at the NLTA immediately after an incident, and those individuals should become involved in the process to protect and advocate for the teacher. I have personally felt alone and lost when dealing with a violent incident, and I have also experienced the empowerment that comes from contacting the police and working with the courts to reach a resolution for my issue.

HOLLIS CULL

It is very concerning to see the uptick in violent/aggressive behavior in schools and the lack of accountability taken by the offending students. Teachers are coming to work in an atmosphere that is not only potentially harmful physically but more importantly, the emotional impact of these attacks are devastating. The Association should be advocating for much harsher penalties for offenders, the least of which should be expulsion from the school system. The courts seem to be a farce so we should be advocating for violent offenders to be expelled from the schools and its grounds. I know it sounds harsh but a wake-up call needs to be sent

ANGELA DAWE

Teachers are not trained/nor equipped to “mend” all of the deficits of society. The NLTA needs to relentlessly fight to address the employer’s unwillingness/incapability to adequately resource our schools with sufficient levels and types of personnel. I believe that the NLTA should regularly be reminding members of their right to refuse unsafe work. We have this right—and many do not (or do not feel they can) exercise it. We’ve become desensitized to the violence in our schools—and have somewhat grown to believe that this is simply “part of the job”. We have been asked to change our assessment practices several times since 2017, and this has directly fed the void of student accountability. The NLTA needs to advocate for policies rooted in research, complemented by active teachers’ input as opposed to being developed by people that are removed from an active teaching practice in today’s classroom.

STEPHANIE DROVER-EDMUNDS

The NLTA needs to continue collaborating with non-Government organizations and interdisciplinary teams to enhance member wellness. Efforts must continue to raise public awareness of violent student behavior and a lack of accountability through various media channels. The NLTA can inform teachers about services available to safeguard themselves and their families, while understanding their legal rights. This can be achieved through in-person or virtual sessions during school PL days, ideally on the administration day at the start of the school year. Representatives can offer virtual sessions or distribute resource materials to ensure teachers are well-informed. Strengthening connections with teachers is possible by providing opportunities to share experiences through surveys on school violence. The NLTA must lobby school districts to foster a culture of respect and understanding, enforce stricter policies aligned with safety standards, and advocate for increased resources such as teaching units, IRT, student assistance, and school counselors to prevent future incidents.

MARIE-CHANTAL HURLEY

Violence in schools—whether physical, bullying, threats, or violent language—has become too common, and we have grown complacent. While schools aim to be safe havens, we’ve failed to adequately address violent behavior. Students who engage in violence are often left in classrooms with minimal consequences, and teachers are blamed for triggering these outbursts.

We need clear, consistent consequences for violent behavior. Students who exhibit violent tendencies should be removed until a safety plan is in place. Parents must also be held accountable for ensuring their child’s behavior improves. Support from school psychologists, behavioral techs and counselors is essential for students with behavioral challenges. Schools must act as primary care institutions, addressing issues that hinder a child’s ability to be part of a school community and preventing the school-to-prison or school-to-mental-health institution pipeline.

NICOLE LEWIS

In our profession, it is essential that we uphold a culture of respect, safety, and professionalism. Violence, aggression, or harassment have no place in the work environment. While a portion of this problem is a lack of human resources, the other was clearly articulated and outlined in our last Provincial Collective Agreement, under Article 58. This article serves as a crucial safeguard to protect the well-being of all individuals within our profession and to ensure that a respectful and supportive environment is maintained. I believe it is imperative for the NLTA to

remind our employer of this negotiated agreement and ensure that its provisions are being fully recognized and correctly enforced. It is not enough for these standards to be written into an agreement; they must be actively upheld in our workplaces, with consistent enforcement, to guarantee that our professional environment remains safe and conducive to effective teaching and learning.

PATRICK MURPHY

This is a critical issue and many other issues stem from the lack of resources in our schools. The Association should lobby for more professionals, such as counsellors and social workers, to have resident offices in or near schools, so that a community team approach could be used to deal with many of these unsafe incidents as they occur. Teachers are not often trained in the multitude of needs of students. Those professionals ought to have the opportunity to be present and respond as a part of a team approach for the betterment and safety of all concerned parties. It is often said that it takes a community to raise a child. I believe it takes a community to educate them too.

TRACEY PAYNE

Teachers must report acts of violence and there must be a zero-tolerance policy in schools regarding violence. The NLTA needs to continue to offer support through EAP/counselling when these incidents happen. The NLTA must advocate that the employer has a clear and concise policy to address violent incidents, and advocate for more human resources within the schools to deal with students with violent behavior. There needs to be more TLAs, SAs, guidance counselors, and IRTs in our schools. Social workers are needed in some of our schools because teachers are often trying to navigate waters which are outside their scope of practice.

There needs to be a stronger partnership with RNC/RCMP. An alternate school should be available for those students with such violent behaviors. Too often, teachers are being asked and expected to deal with children whose issues are best dealt with by health professionals in a different setting.

RUSSELL STOCKLEY

Violent acts in our schools towards students and teachers have risen significantly over the past number of years. In the Spring of 2024, the NLTA launched a “Not Okay” campaign to highlight these levels of violence. The NLTA should continue to push the narrative of this campaign into the current “I Stand with Our Teachers” campaign to make sure that these issues remain front and centre with the government.

The dialogue from the Teachers’ Think Tank on teacher violence resulted in the creation of a Student Services TLA position. These positions have been welcomed, but resourcing cannot stop there. We need more specialist teachers such as Educational Psychologists and School Counsellors. Many schools are without an Ed Psych staffed at their respective schools, and some schools have very limited access to School Counsellors. These specialists are better equipped to deal with the mental health and other complex needs of our students.

DELLA WAY

Addressing violent/aggressive student behavior, lack of accountability, and inadequate resources requires urgent action by the NLTA. The NLTA needs to advocate for stronger policies that prioritize teacher and student safety, including clearer behavior intervention protocols and consistent consequences for violence. To ensure this happens we need reduced class sizes, improved access to alternative education programs for students with complex behavioral needs, and better training for educators in de-escalation and classroom management. We need stricter enforcement of policies that protect teachers, while ensuring that schools receive the necessary resources to manage challenges effectively.

Question 6. NLTA members have concerns about Department of Education initiated reforms and policies that are not based in research, create unrealistic expectations, and/or are not sufficiently resourced to ensure successful implementation. What approach do you think the Association should take in advocating to ensure that teachers' expertise and lived realities are taken into account when the employer/government is considering systemic changes?

IAN ADEY

The NLTA should ensure that teachers from various regions across the province participate in developing and executing all significant curriculum and policy changes. Our organization is incredibly diverse, facing unique rural and urban challenges that can complicate the introduction of new policies. Within our rural and urban divides, we also have many different cultural backgrounds that also need to have their voices included in making any major changes. Involving teachers in policy creation might alleviate many of the problems that arise once a policy is in place.

HOLLIS CULL

Just recently, the Department tried to implement a new curriculum. It is not that we are opposed to it, it is simply that we need to be involved in the process. I was enthused that the NLTA spoke out against the implementation because there were unrealistic expectations from the employer about the timeline of implementation plus little to no professional learning in the curriculum for teachers. We should be advocating for input directly from teachers on new programming, as they are the ones on the ground, and know what is needed and what is not. Having people implement new programming that haven't seen the inside of a classroom for years is not the route to take.

ANGELA DAWE

In the realm of education, we strive to set others up for success—it's our *modus operandi*—so how can policy developers push such a contradictory agenda? Systemic changes in education, developed behind closed doors with unnamed people (Intermediate Curriculum Renewal), is not an equation that I would ever endorse. Seeking feedback from teachers and the public after the program has been slated to start within a few months is unreasonable, and disrespects us as professionals. The realities and lived experiences of but a few of our members were passionately shared with the employer/government during the "Teacher Think Tank" in 2024. There were actual Government employees shocked by the stories that were shared. How could they be shocked? Are they working in silos? How do they not know the realities of our classrooms? Any systemic change that does not have the full endorsement of the NLTA should raise alarms.

STEPHANIE DROVER-EDMUNDS

It is imperative that the NLTA remind our employer to follow its own mandate and implement reforms and policies that are found in evidence-based research. The NLTA should continue

to advocate for our employer to actively involve teachers in decision-making processes. Teachers' input is indispensable if we aim to develop policies that create a unified, safe, and effective work environment for all stakeholders when considering and implementing change. The employer's reforms and policies should ensure a fair, ethical, and responsible allocation of expectations/workloads, taking into account teachers' expertise and lived realities that include their past and current situations. The NLTA should continue to advocate to our employer, emphasizing that establishing a reasonable work-life balance is critical. Reminding our employer that unrealistic expectations and being under-resourced could hinder the successful implementation of their reform and policies. Open, accountable dialogue is vital—this includes listening, troubleshooting, and providing constructive feedback.

MARIE-CHANTAL HURLEY

Many Department of Education initiatives fail to consider the realities teachers face, such as the rollout of new curriculum, assessment policies, or inclusion models without adequate resources. While full inclusion should be the goal, it must be assessed based on whether students can access the curriculum with minimal adjustments. The current model, however, has been implemented without consideration of students' individual needs, leaving many unable to access grade-level content. Teachers are then required to support students so extensively that other students are neglected, blurring the lines between differentiation and overburdening teachers.

Moreover, the current criteria for student assistants are overly restrictive, leaving many students without the necessary support. Inclusion, as currently implemented, lacks sufficient funding, human resources, and practical solutions. Without these, the model becomes a budget cut rather than an effective educational strategy. We need to return to proven common-sense practices that prioritize realistic, sustainable solutions for both teachers and students.

NICOLE LEWIS

It is absolutely crucial for the Department of Education to engage in open and ongoing communication with all educational stakeholders when considering systemic changes within the education system. Such changes should not be implemented through unilateral decisions made solely by the Department of Education, as this approach could lead to unintended consequences, particularly for educators and students. Collaboration

and consultation with stakeholders are essential to ensure that the changes being considered are effective, practical, and aligned with the best interests of students and the standards of education we uphold.

PATRICK MURPHY

The only way to deal with this issue is through consistent and reliable data. This can be generated through the Associations' continued use of surveys, polls, and logged data from teacher calls and emails to the NLTA office. We as members should take every opportunity we can to reach out and share our experiences and opinions when called on to do so. We need to find it in ourselves to not rationalize excuses to avoid filling out surveys or putting off that phone call to an NLTA staff member. The more data the administrative officers and executive director have, the more informed they can make their often isolated counterparts in the Department of Education on our plight in the classrooms of our province.

TRACEY PAYNE

No systemic change should occur without the NLTA being a part of the consultation process. Teachers must be the go-to people and seen as the experts on all matters related to education, as doctors are seen as the experts in their field.

The Association must be consulted in all matters pertaining to education. All stakeholders need to be a part of the process. Views from all stakeholders must be considered when making changes. There needs to be less change occurring continuously. Teachers have experienced so many changes every year for the last five years, that it is overwhelming to try to keep up.

The DOE should have educators in the higher roles who understand the realities of the current classroom, not a nurse, a business professional, a doctor, etc. We are the experts in education; therefore, the DOE must speak to the teachers in the trenches.

RUSSELL STOCKLEY

Just recently, the Department of Education was ready to roll out its new Junior High curriculum reform. Many teachers spoke up about the concerns they had with its implementation, but the provincial government was ready to roll. However, it was suddenly stopped when parents (rightfully) spoke up about it and their concerns. As it stands, the government reneged on their stance. This was not just insulting, but also lacks the respect that teachers deserve as professionals.

In the last round of negotiations, the NLTA successfully bargained for a committee on both the RTL model, as well as the Teacher Allocation Review Report. This means that when recommendations are reported, they must have oversight from the NLTA before results are released. As new initiatives are explored by the employer, the NLTA must make them as a part of the collective bargaining process so that our experts—our teachers—have a say in them, too.

DELLA WAY

The NLTA must continue to take a firm stance against unrealistic or under-resourced education reforms. We need input from educators on the ground and teachers must be consulted in all stages of policy development to ensure that decisions reflect our current classroom realities. Public advocacy is also key—raising awareness through media campaigns and direct engagement with parents and stakeholders can build broader support for teacher-informed reforms. We need to build on systemic change that makes our current system more accountable before implementing future changes. Additionally, the NLTA should demand accountability from the government, ensuring that any new initiatives come with adequate resources, training, and realistic implementation timelines. Through collective bargaining and lobbying, we must continue to push for policies that prioritize both teacher well-being and student success; ensuring that educators' voices shape the future of our provinces' education system.

