



MEETING OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Happy New Year and welcome to our first Central Executive Meeting for 2018. It is my wish that this year will be a productive and purpose-driven one and that, ultimately, you will experience much joy, peace and even prosperity during this year.

It is very unfortunate that, as a country, we have begun the New Year pretty much the way we ended 2017. There continues to be a frightening escalation in the murder rate. We are killing at a rate of approximately five (5) per day and despite the introduction of a State of Emergency in St. James, the bloodletting continues.

We mourn with those who have lost love ones and embrace our colleague Amoi Gayle-Lindo from Green Pond High School who lost her son, a student of Cornwall College, to the crime madness.

We are also saddened by the sudden passing of a committed and outstanding member, Melonie Dixon, who died on December 19, 2017.

We are happy to welcome Dr. Margaret Chin to the JTA team as Assistant Secretary General, Professional Services. We have high hopes and great expectations for Dr. Chin. We wish her many happy and productive years in the Association.

Colleagues, the month of January has been dominated mostly by issues relative to our Salary and Conditions of Service, with uncertainties being the operative word. To date, we have averted industrial action but the struggle is not over, hence the future is still uncertain.

I wish to commend, very highly, our President Georgia Waugh Richards, for her stridency and leadership during these stormy days and the impressive way in which she has been navigating the media landscape.

The days ahead will continue to demand the best from all of us as leaders of the Association, whether at the District or Parish Association level, whether we are committee chair or Trustee, Officer or staff member. All of us must possess and display one critical characteristic, that of loyalty – loyalty to a cause that is bigger and more important than all of our individual views and ideas. In the end, what really matters is that we stand as one united force. I therefore bid you welcome and look forward to your full participation in our deliberations.

2.0 FIFTY PERCENT (50%) TUITION REFUND

The latest information reveals that up to November 2017:

- Thirty (30) paid \$6,689,146.00
- Thirty-two applications awaiting payment totalling \$6,810,925.26
- Thirty-seven (37) applications awaiting verification totalling \$12,287,947.96

It should be noted that we did not have a meeting with the Ministry of Education in January 2018. Hence we are not aware of the current position.

3.0 SALARY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE CLAIM 2017-2019

The JTA Negotiating Team met with the Ministry of Finance on December 11, 2017 where the same 6% offer over two (2) years was again trumpeted with little or no change to most of the items. We again met on January 3, 2018 where the offer of 6% was again placed on the table. We, however, saw some movements in some of the other items. The Association, however, rejected the offer on Basis Salary and advised the Government that normalcy in the education sector could not be guaranteed if there was not a significantly improved offer.

The Action Committee met on January 3, 2018 and drafted a number of strategies to include Industrial Action during the week of January 8-12, 2018 while at the same time giving the Government an ultimatum to respond to our demands by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, January 8, 2018 or else.

The Association heard from the Government prior to 5:00 p.m. on Monday the 8th, the message being that the Cabinet would be retreating to consider Government's response to public sector demands for improved salaries and conditions of service. Following the Cabinet retreat, the Prime Minister met with the heads of Public Sector Unions in an attempt to convince them of the economic challenges that the country faces and seeking their buy-in at this time.

The Association has been invited to continue negotiations at the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service on Tuesday, January 30, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. We look forward to this meeting with much anxiety as we feel that it will be a decisive one in this long, drawn-out negotiating period. The way forward will be decided on after the meeting at the Ministry of Finance.

I wish to reiterate that no one but the teachers negotiate for the teachers. Therefore, utterances from the Confederation of Trade Unions are not utterances on behalf of the Jamaica Teachers' Association.

4.0 JTA ROLL OF HONOUR AWARD

Mr. Paul Adams, Past President of the JTA and Principal of Herbert Morrison Technical High School, is the 2017 recipient of this prestigious award. The presentation ceremony will take place on Tuesday, February 13, 2018 at the Pegasus Hotel beginning at 7:00 p.m. We are all invited. Ambassador Burchell Whiteman will be the Guest Speaker.

5.0 ANNUAL GENERAL STAFF RETREAT

This activity was held as a one-day event at the Courtleigh Hotel in Kingston on Friday, December 1, 2017. The programme proved to be very relevant and meaningful to participants.

6.0 CHRISTMAS STAFF DINNER AND PARTY

This was an extremely successful event. It was held at the Spanish Court Hotel on Tuesday, December 19, 2017. It was good to have had Trustees Woodburn Miller and Ray Howell in attendance.

We commend Dr. Charmaine Gooden Monteith and her supportive team for a job well done.

7.0 MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Despite promises, we have still not supplied the new look Membership Cards to all members. We, however, are getting closer to achieving this goal. We are setting the end of February as our deadline and hope that we will achieve this. Any issue relating to Membership Cards should be routed through the Regional Offices.

We continue to recognize Dr. Nicely and his team for the work in this area. All recipients of the cards are pleased.

8.0 TEACHERS' FAMILY FUN DAY

The Planning Committee, led by Claudia McLean, is working assiduously despite challenges to ensure that this will be a successful day. The event will take place at James Bond Beach, Oracabessa, St. Mary on Thursday, February 15, 2018.

9.0 TEACHERS' NETBALL AND FOOTBALL COMPETITIONS

The semi-finalists in the Netball Competition are: Kingston, St. James, Manchester and Westmoreland while the semi-finalists for the Football Competition are: St. Mary, St. Catherine, St. Andrew and Manchester.

The semi-finals are scheduled for February 1, 2018 at Clarendon Park, Clarendon.

10.0 ERROL MILLER CRICKET COMPETITION

The Errol Miller Cricket Competition will commence after Fun Day. The tentative date is February 23, 2018.

11.0 NOMINATIONS FOR PRESIDENT ELECT 2018-2019

Nomination forms were distributed to Parish and District Associations. The closing date for nominations is February 23, 2018.

12.0 JTA AWARDS

We are in the process of signing off on the Nominations Forms for the following awards:

- RC Tavares
- Edith Dalton James
- WBC (Ben) Hawthorne

We have therefore circulated the Draft Nomination Forms and would like to have your approval at this meeting in order that they can be sent out.

13.0 GOLDEN TORCH AWARD

The information and relevant forms have been sent to the various institutions. The deadline for their return is Friday, March 2, 2018.

14.0 NOMINATIONS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEDAL OF APPRECIATION

We have dispatched forms to all Parish Presidents. We encourage parishes to nominate qualified persons and ask that you provide as much detail as possible. The forms must be returned to the office by February 16, 2018.

15.0 ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The planning for our Annual Education Conference has begun. We are, however, experiencing a major challenge, that of finding suitable and affordable accommodation.

16.0 HURRICANE RELIEF APPEAL FUND

As you may recall, we launched a Hurricane Relief Appeal Fund in October 2017 to assist our Caribbean neighbours who suffered from the impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. I regret to report that the response to our appeal was very poor. We thank and applaud the few institutions that made a contribution. The Association has committed, Five Thousand United States Dollars (US\$5,000.00) to this most deserving cause.

17.0 TERTIARY GRANT

We have got the Government to agree for us to begin processing the Tertiary Grant for children of Public Sector Teachers who are members of the JTA ahead of the conclusion of the negotiation. We will be accepting applications as of February 1, 2018. Members will be informed about this in due time.

18.0 TRAVEL AND WELLNESS ACTIVITY

The Travel and Wellness Club will be having its Annual Pre-Valentines Mixer on Friday, February 9, 2018 at 97B Church Street.

19.0 UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

19.1 3rd EI Women's Conference

The President will be participating in the 3rd EI Women's Conference in Marrakech, Morocco, February 5 – 7, 2018.

19.2 Caribbean Union of Teachers' Executive Meeting

This will take place in Trinidad and Tobago, February 22 – 23, 2018. The President and Dr. Charmaine Gooden Monteith will be the Association's representatives.

19.3 EI Regional Conference for North America and the Caribbean

This conference will be held in Trinidad and Tobago, February 24 – 26, 2018. The Association’s delegation will be led by President Georgia Waugh Richards and will be comprised of Mrs. Blossette Plummer, Chairman International Relations Committee; Miss Taticia Clarke, Chairman, Professional Advancement and Teacher Welfare Committee and Dr. Charmaine Gooden Monteith, Deputy Secretary General, Administration, HRD and Finance.

19.4 UN 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62)

This activity will be held at the UN Headquarters, New York, USA, March 10 – 16, 2018. The President will represent the Association.

19.5 Diaspora 3rd Education Summit

The Jamaica Teachers’ Association has been invited to participate in a Diaspora Education Summit to be held in March 2018 in Miramar, Fort Lauderdale, USA. Arrangements are being made to host at least fifty (50) educators from Jamaica. The process to identify and select these persons is in train. We hope the activity will prove mutually beneficial.

20.0 CONCLUSION

The challenges that we face as an Association or as a nation cannot be wished away. We will have to double our resolve to stay the course irrespective of the difficulties and the temptation to give in.

Every time we feel like giving up, we must look back at our rich history and the sacrifices of those who went on before. The path of the teacher is not one of ease and contentment. I implore all of us to rally around our leaders and give the critical support that is necessary to see the task through to its proper conclusion.

We again remind all of us, how important unity of purpose and commitment to a cause is. Our victory can only come when we band together through the difficult times because we believe that in the end, we shall overcome as we continue to *Unite and Serve*.

**Prepared by: Byron Farquharson
Secretary General**