



JAMAICA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

MEETING OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2017

SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I take great pleasure in extending a warm welcome to this our first Central Executive meeting for the Conference Year 2017-2018. As always, we applaud and appreciate the contribution and commitment of all our volunteers. You, based on your unselfish acts, have ensured that the mission of the Association is constantly kept in focus.

We are guided by the advice of our forefathers that eternal vigilance must be our posture, lest many battles that we have won will be gradually whittled away. Your role as leaders in this preservation process is crucial. We must not only preserve the legacy but advance the effort to make the union even more relevant to our members and the society at large.

Again, you are pivotal in keeping the dream alive. So, as we come from our various locations and positions within the system, let us remember why we are here and whom we represent.

Again, welcome and we look forward to your active participation in our deliberations.

2.0 50% TUITION REFUND

The Ministry of Education has reported that in October, ninety-seven (97) teachers were paid their tuition refund. This amounted to \$20,028,500.00. Nineteen (19) applications are at accounts to be paid, seventy-five (75) applications are with the internal auditors for verification.

Regional Officers were given the names of twenty-six (26) persons whose applications are awaiting documents. Outstanding documents not included:

- Letter from Principal stating no type of leave was taken
- Teacher's name not on timetable
- TRN not certified

We remind colleagues that the required documents must be submitted, otherwise the process will be further delayed.

3.0 OTHER ISSUES

Other issues discussed with the Ministry of Education included:

- i. The National Standards Curriculum and the need for more resources to the schools
- ii. The Appraisal Instrument – the position of this being a Trial Document was reinforced
- iii. A list of issues/challenges from schools which was generated at General Council meeting in September was shared with the Ministry and responses were provided.

3.0 SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

As you are aware, we have sought to press the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service for a date to resume negotiations. We were informed on Thursday afternoon, that they are willing to meet with us on Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. to continue negotiations. This is welcomed news because the mood of the teachers has not been a pleasant one. We hope that we can advance the negotiation process in a significant way.

4.0 LEADERSHIP TRAINING 2017

This very useful activity was carried out on September 30, 2017 and October 7th in all four regions.

Date	Region	No. of Participants
September 30	South Central	70
September 30	South East	68
October 7	North East	44
October 7	West	56
Total		238

The feedback suggests that participants viewed the activity as important and that the training will better equip them to carry out their roles and functions more effectively. We thank all those who made it possible.

5.0 NEW TEACHERS' SEMINARS 2017

This year, the buzz words seem to be *“well supported”*. We are happy for this because, apart from the obvious benefit of improved membership, we believe that, as a responsible organization, we owe it to the profession to ensure that our new colleagues are appropriately inducted into the profession.

Date	Region	No. of Participants
October 5	West	110
October 6	North East	117
October 18	South East	132
October 25	South Central	156
Total		515

We hope that the majority of those new recruits will join up as members.

Again we commend the planners and implementers of this activity.

6.0 MEMBERSHIP CARDS

The Membership Cards for Bursar-paid institutions are being distributed. It means that the mopping-up exercise for all members will be somewhat delayed but we are committed to completing this as soon as possible.

We repeat the point that replacement cards will come at a cost to the member who is at fault.

7.0 JTA HONOUR ROLL

We have received eight (8) nominations for six (6) persons. The processing will follow with a view to hosting the Honouring Ceremony early in 2018.

8.0 CONTACT TEACHERS' SEMINARS

Seminars for Contact Teachers with five (5) or less years' experience will be held during November. They are scheduled as follows:

Date	Region
November 2	West & North East
November 28	South East & South Central

9.0 HALF YEARLY MEETINGS

Half yearly meetings will be held for all parishes except St. Andrew during November. They will commence on Friday, November 3, 2017. A schedule of activity is tabled.

10.0 TRAVEL AND WELLNESS GETAWAY

It has been reported that a very successful and well supported Travel and Wellness Getaway took place October 12-14, 2017 at the Iberostar Hotel, St. James. Over 240 persons (including children) participated.

11.0 HURRICANE APPEAL FUND

The Association launched a Hurricane Appeal Fund to assist our Caribbean neighbours who suffered at the hands of hurricanes Irma and Maria. The response so far seems very poor. We will seek to ascertain the level of response in the coming week with a view to forwarding the funds to the Caribbean Union of Teachers in November. We are still open to accepting funds.

12.0 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The Association is planning a Women's Conference to be held on Tuesday, November 21, 2017 at the Knutsford Court Hotel. The theme for the conference is "*Women: Inspired and Empowered to Overcome and Lead*". Each parish has been written to, to identify and name ten (10) representatives from the parish. It is expected that two hundred (200) women will participate in this conference.

We hope all the plans will go smoothly and that the objectives will be achieved.

13.0 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES AND INCOME

The Association is aware of the discussions and positions being proffered by various persons as well as the Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information on October 19, 2017 advising the relevant persons to comply. We have sought legal opinions on the matter and the opinion is that while the Ministry does not explicitly name teachers, they are caught by section 4 of the Act and are thus obliged to file annual statutory declarations, if they earn over \$2,000,000.00 per annum.

14.0 PURCHASE OF MOTOR VEHICLE

The Association has completed the process of purchasing a 2017 Toyota Prado Land Cruiser to be used by the President. The cost of the vehicle is Eight Million Four Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$8,450,000.00). We have secured a loan of Seven Million Dollars (\$7,000,000.00) at an interest rate of 7.99% from Scotiabank to offset most of the cost. The remainder of the fund is from the Association.

It is expected that we will receive the vehicle during the coming week.

15.0 HOSTING OF C.U.T. EXECUTIVE MEETING

The Association has been asked to host the Executive Meeting of the Caribbean Union of Teachers in December 2017. This is occasioned by the fact that Anguilla who was down to host the meeting cannot do so because of the setback they have experienced due to the passage of Hurricane Irma on their island.

The time is limited but we are doing some checks with hotels with a view to accepting this offer to host.

16.0 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All committees would have received their mandates from the President. Most have met and have set their plan for the year in place. We encourage committees to stick to the schedule because there is a challenge to having too many meetings on any one day. We acknowledge, with gratitude, the efforts of all committee members and the members of the Administrative Staff who offer support.

17.0 CONCLUSION

As we reflect on the very demanding nature of the job of the teacher, one is forced to ask, *why do we have to experience so much difficulty when we negotiate?* What it suggests to me is that we have to demand what is rightly ours and be prepared to do what is necessary to achieve our objectives. No one is particularly concerned about us, hence we must be for ourselves. It follows therefore that a *call to action* is not far-fetched and must be seen as a logical step to get government to recognize that we exist.

It is hoped that we will not need to take drastic action for our demands to be met.

May we remain loyal and committed to a struggle that continues as we Unite and Serve.

**Prepared by: Byron Farquharson
Secretary General**