



# MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE JAMAICA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2016

## **REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Once again, it is with much pleasure that I welcome you to this General Council meeting. Again, I acknowledge and commend you for your commitment and support of the activities of the Association.

We are very conscious of the challenging circumstances under which our teachers have to work. It is very evident that teaching is a stressful activity and, as such, our teachers need to be armed with coping strategies in order not to go under. We pause to recognize and applaud those of our colleagues who, despite the many challenges, continue to give of your best.

I listened with amazement when the news stated that the Principal of Bellevue Primary School in Portland, walked for over one and a half hours through mud and treacherous road conditions to go to his school and conducted class for his grade six students during the aftermath of hurricane Matthew. So heroism and commitment are really celebrated. We want to salute Mr. Reid and the many others like him who continue to go beyond the call of duty to serve the education system.

As we seek to give support and provide professional guidance to our members, let us again pause and take time to *smell the roses*. Let us strive to make each day a worthwhile and productive one in the context of our workplace.

I therefore trust that we will have a productive meeting and that you will feel free to participate fully in our deliberations. Again welcome!

## **2.0 SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

### **2.1 50% Refund of Tuition**

This activity is an ongoing one and the Ministry of Education has reported that they have paid all outstanding amounts up to the end of October 2016.

### **2.2 Tertiary Grant**

All matters relative to the first tranche is now behind us and our focus is on processing and recommending to the Ministry of Education, the persons who have qualified to benefit from this grant. We received 259 applications. It must be pointed out that too many of our children are enrolled in programmes that are not accredited.

It is our intention for the payment of this \$1.5M grant to be made to all beneficiaries by the end of this semester.

### **2.3 Settlement of Outstanding Issues from the 2015-2017 Heads of Agreement**

This matter is work in progress. Admittedly, the process is slow. We should note that all unresolved matters will be placed back on our 2017-2019 Claim and these will have to be cleared before negotiation can be completed.

### **2.4 Pension Reform**

We have seen Pension Reform written as one of the conditions of the recently signed Precautionary Standby Agreement (PSA) that the Government reached with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The document explicitly states that it:

- becomes effective April 1, 2017
- raises the retirement age to 65
- requires a 5% mandatory contribution by workers
- lowers the benefit accrual rate to 1.8%

We have written to the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service as well as shared with Ministers Reid and Green the Association's position which is essentially requesting a phased-in over a period of five (5) years for teachers. We are aware of the efforts of the Joint Confederation of Trade Unions to get the Prime Minister and his

Government to listen to and address the concerns that public Sector workers have.

#### **2.5 Submission of the Association's Draft Claim for the 2017-2019 Contract Period**

This Council will examine and approve the Claim on behalf of the Association for the 2017-2019 contract period which will be submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service before December 31, 2016.

#### **3.0 NATIONAL COLLEGE ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP (N.C.E.L.)**

The issue of Principals' permanent appointment relative to the National College on Educational Leadership took a new twist recently, when the Minister of Education wrote to the Teachers' Service Commission to state that permanently appointed principals who move from a lower grade school to a higher grade one and have not completed the NCEL training will not be appointed permanently. This position is totally unacceptable and the Association has communicated this position to the Minister. We are in the process of working out a solution to the issue with him.

#### **4.0 THE NEW NATIONAL STANDARDS CURRICULUM**

The Association has placed before the Minister and the Ministry of Education the concerns that members have expressed pertaining to the implementation of the new curriculum. There are promises made by the Ministry to review the implementation process and to share with the JTA what the approach going forward will be.

#### **5.0 TEACHER UPPGRADING EXERCISE**

We have shared concerns raised by some of our members who are involved in this exercise with the Ministry of Education. They have promised to look into the matter and we await their feedback at our next meeting (JTA/MOE).

#### **6.0 NEW TEACHERS' SEMINARS**

The Association has staged a successful set of New Teachers' Seminars. We have seen increased numbers, as well as a positive outlook towards the activity this year. The future seems bright with these "*bright-looking*" new recruits. The Association must ensure that most of them become members.

The attendance was as follows:

South East	120
South Central	148
West	109
North East	48

#### **7.0 LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS**

These were held in all regions. They all proved to be very successful.

- South East - 61
- South Central - 68
- West - 51
- North East - 45

#### **8.0 CONTACT TEACHERS SEMINARS**

These were held in all regions except the South East Region. It was agreed that the focus this year would be on Contact Teachers with two (2) and under years of service. The attendance for this activity was as follows:

- North East - 38
- South Central - 57
- West - 37

#### **9.0 HALF YEARLY MEETINGS**

All parishes except St. Andrew would have had their Half-Yearly meeting. The feedback indicated that, while the attendance figures were not always high, the quality of the meetings was very good. Most parishes made an effort to have a presentation made on health-related issues with stress taking prominence. We applaud our Parish Leaders.

It should be noted that all parishes have received the first tranche of their subsidy.

#### **10.0 ROLL OF HONOUR**

The presentation ceremony for the 2016 Roll of Honour Award will be held on Tuesday, November 29, 2016 at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, beginning at 7:00 p.m. the recipient will be Past President and Retired Regional Officer Mr. Juno Gayle. Dr. Henry Lowe will be the Guest Speaker.

We are looking forward to an impressive ceremony and your attendance is required if we are to achieve this objective.

#### **11.0 MEMBERSHIP CARDS**

The commitment to provide our members with a suitable membership card remains our goal but, as we go along, we realize that to produce the card with a photograph is proving more challenging. Conscious of this, Central Executive voted, in October, for the production of these cards without photographs. I have brought back the issue on the table and would like General Council to ratify this decision.

As we speak, the process of collating the required data is ongoing. We would like to have cards out early in the New Year.

#### **12.0 FRAUD-RELATED ISSUE**

Efforts have been made, mainly through Trustee and Property Chairman, Ray Howell, to identify the properties granted to us through the Courts with a view to possessing and securing them. We are working with our attorney to expedite the process.

#### **13.0 GIFT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION BOOKS**

The Association has benefitted from a gift of approximately 200 Special Education books. These books came from Dr. Ladkar from Nova Southeastern University who having retired, shared much of his vast collection with Church Teachers' College and the JTA. Thanks to Dr. Polly Bowes-Howell and Church Teachers' College who made this possible. Our library stock will be greatly enhanced.

#### **14.0 NETBALL RALLY**

Our annual Netball Rally was held on Saturday, November 19, 2016 at the Manchester High School in Mandeville. Seven parishes participated. Congratulations to Manchester who emerged champions. St. Catherine was second and Westmoreland was third. Special commendation to Portland who braved the weather and transportation challenges to participate.

A big thank you to Miss Claudia McLean, Mr. Colin Spence and the organizers for a great day of fun and relaxation.

#### **15.0 HAITI APPEAL FUND**

The Association launched an appeal to collect funds within our education institutions to assist Haiti in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. To date, we have collected approximately One Hundred and Ten Thousand Dollars (\$110,000.00). In addition, the Association will be contributing Two Thousand

United States Dollars (US\$2,000.00) to the cause. We wish to thank all our institutions that participated in this act of kindness and care.

**16.0 BURSARS APPRECIATION LUNCHEON**

We are in the process of planning an Appreciation Luncheon for Bursars who remit membership dues to the Association. This is scheduled to be held at RIU, Ocho Rios, on Thursday, December 8, 2016. The response so far is somewhat low and this would have implication for whether or not the activity will happen.

**17.0 TOURS**

All tours were placed on hold pending the receipt of Financial Statements for Canada, 2015 Disney World, March 2016 and China, July/August 2016 Tours, as well as the development of protocol for tours. We will submit, for your approval, the Protocol for Tours.

**18.0 CLAIM FROM THE B.I.T.U.**

The Association has received a Claim from the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union on behalf of the Clerical, Accounting, Ancillary and Security Staff for the 2016-2018 contract period. We have since had a clarification meeting and we hope that we can complete negotiations within a relatively short time.

**19.0 CARIBBEAN UNION OF TEACHERS MATTERS**

Our President and Deputy Secretary General, Administration, HR and Finance will be attending an Education Conference and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, December 12 – 16, 2016.

**20.0 SPECIAL I.L.O. TRAINING**

Dr. Mark Nicely participated in an International Labour Standards and Corporate Social Responsibility Training Course at ILO Headquarters, Turin, Italy, November 21 – 25, 2016. He was a participant representing the Joint Confederation of Trade Unions (JCTU).

**21.0 ANNUAL GENERAL STAFF RETREAT**

The Annual General Staff Retreat is scheduled to be held at the Royalton Hotel, Trelawny, December 1-3, 2016.

## **22.0 THE SECRETARIAT**

Mrs. Judith Spencer-Jarrett, Deputy Secretary General, Administration, HR and Finance, will be proceeding on earned vacation leave prior to retirement as of January 1, 2017 and she will begin her retirement as of September 1, 2017.

Our thanks to Mrs. Spencer-Jarrett for her almost lifelong commitment and service to this Association. We pray that the next phase of her life will bring her much happiness.

## **23.0 CONCLUSION**

The calendar year has rushed by so quickly that, if we are not careful, we get left behind. To the extent that you have achieved some of your goals, whether personal or organizational, then we can feel satisfied that after all, all is not lost. The fact that you have survived, is something to celebrate because many of our colleagues have passed.

Let us resolve to be a little kinder to each other, conscious that we shall pass this way but once.

It is my wish that you and those you love will experience the peace and blessedness of the season and that the New Year 2017 will find you striving to be the best in your professional and personal life.

Let us continue to *Unite and Serve*.

**Prepared by: Byron Farquharson**  
**Secretary General**

**November 26, 2016**