



MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2015
JTA Head Office, Ben Hawthorne Conference Room
2nd Floor, 97B Church Street, Kingston

SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

A warm welcome to all members of General Council. Special welcome to those who are on the Council for the first time. This will be a learning experience from which you will benefit.

We welcome our President, Norman Allen, and wish for him a productive year. So far, he has been negotiating the demands of the job quite well. We welcome President Elect Howard Isaacs to the team and wish for him an exciting year of learning. Welcome to and recognition of Immediate Past President Doran Dixon who ran a good leg and fought a good fight. May he too have a good year in his new role.

Special welcome to Liaison Officer Claudia McLean. She is adjusting quite well. We welcome and applaud members of the Administrative Staff for their continued support. We believe that this year is going to be a good year because we all seem focused, excited and willing to make a contribution.

We again take note of the passing of Dr. Dorothy Raymond, Past President and past Senior Secretary Administration and Finance. We take note of her invaluable contribution to the development of this Association and pray that her soul will find rest.

2. THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

The start of the 2015-2016 school year has been quite smooth. Much of the credit belongs to our principals and teachers. Where challenges existed, efforts were made to resolve them and, by now, all schools have re-opened. We note some of the unfortunate developments. For example, the fire at Carmel Primary School in Westmoreland. I am happy to report that our President and Regional Officer Hall were able to visit the location on day two of the school year. We note also signs of continued violence in some schools as well as the exploitation by one School Board Chair of our children. We ought to applaud her prompt removal by the Minister of Education. We hear the cry for the protection of our children and pledge our support in this regard.

3. SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

As a result of the vote to accept the Government's offer of 4% in year I and 3% in year II, as well as some improvements on Allowances at our Annual Conference in August, the Association signed the Heads of Agreement between the Government of Jamaica and the Jamaica Teachers' Association on Wednesday, September 2, 2015 at Jamaica House. We are in receipt of a copy of this agreement, as well as the related schedules and we have been informed that work is in progress to ensure that the

new salaries are paid in October and the retroactive paid in November 2015. We shall remain vigilant to ensure that these commitments are honoured. There are items such as assistance for teachers' children in tertiary institutions, for which details of implementation are not yet worked out.

4. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN JTA/BITU

The Association has reached a salary settlement with the Clerical, Accounting, Ancillary and Security staffs. This was achieved at the Ministry of Labour on September 15, 2015 after the threat of Industrial Action was reported to the Ministry of Labour. The Council is being asked to ratify an agreement which sees the categories mentioned previously getting a 5% increase in year I and 4% in year II along with various and varying increases in some allowances. It is anticipated that the new rates will be paid in October while the retroactive amounts will be paid in November 2015. This agreement is for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2016.

5. NEGOTIATIONS FOR OTHER BARGAINING UNITS

To date, we have not commenced negotiations for Lecturers and Instructors in HEART/NTA and for teachers in Preparatory Schools. We hope this will begin soon.

6. CENTRAL EXECUTIVE ORIENTATION SEMINAR

An Orientation Seminar for members of Central Executive was held on Friday, September 18, 2015 at the Medallion Hall Hotel in Kingston. Most members were in attendance and we believe the day's activities were meaningful and productive.

It should be noted that activities for the training of Parish and District leaders, Contact Teachers and New Teachers are being planned. We solicit the co-operation and active participation from all concerned.

7. **SCHOLARSHIP/AWARDS**

Council will be asked to ratify the recommendations from the Interviewing Panel. We wish to congratulate all our recipients.

- **The JTA Roll of Honour Award**

We are hoping that the relevant nominating bodies would have done what they need to do in terms of nominating potential awardees. Today is the deadline. We are planning to have the Awards function in November 2015.

8. **ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2015**

This activity is now behind us. We are happy for the successful staging of our 51st Annual Conference. Those who have outstanding payments are encouraged to settle their account as soon as possible.

9. **MEMBERSHIP CARDS**

A commitment to provide a membership card that befits the professionals that we are remains in force. However, we cannot state exactly when during the year this will happen. We will keep you informed because there are some things that members will be required to do in order for this promise to be fulfilled. We are planning to issue the paper cards as an interim measure.

10. **J.T.A. APP**

The Association's App is now up and running and can be accessed by going to the Google Play Store and downloading it. The App provides you with up-to-date information on the JTA at your fingers. The App is available for android and IOS devices and the Apple App Store. This facility is intended to improve communication within the organization.

11. **NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION (N.C.E.)**

A new Council has been named and is now functional with Dr. Simon Clarke as Chairman. The Association's representatives are Mr. Doran Dixon and Miss Nadine Molloy.

12. **TEACHERS' SERVICE COMMISSION (T.S.C.)**

Members of the Teachers' Service Commission are being appointed with a view to getting that body functional. The JTA's appointees are Mr. Doran Dixon, Mr. David Powell, Miss Nadienne Crossman, Mrs. Judith Spencer-Jarrett, Dr. Mark Nicely and Mr. Byron Farquharson. The chairman is the Right Reverend Howard Gregory.

13. **THE TEACHERS' APPEALS TRIBUNAL**

This body is yet to be fully constituted. The Association's nominee is Past President Cyril Lebert. The delay in appointing this body is causing much concern for some of our members who have cases to be heard.

14. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MATTERS

The Member Services Unit is kept busy dealing with cases. We pledge to give our members the best service possible. Our members are both principals and teachers.

15. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

We renew the commitment to balance the needs of our members and pledge, during this year, to seek to reach and impact more of our members in terms of professional development activities.

16. ACQUISITION OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE

All the paper work has been done to acquire this property. The only outstanding issue is the payment for the property. We are in advanced negotiations with Scotiabank for a mortgage.

17. TRAVEL AND WELLNESS GETAWAY

A Travel and Wellness Getaway is planned for October 15 – 17, 2015 at Iberostar Rose Hall Beach Hotel, Montego Bay, St. James. We hope this will go well.

18. ASSISTANCE TO DOMINICA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS (D.A.T.)

The JTA has sent a contribution of Two Thousand US Dollars (US\$2,000.00) to the Dominica Association of Teachers to assist our colleagues to recover after the passing of Hurricane Ericka. After consultation, it was decided not to seek financial contributions from our schools since the school year has just started.

The Dominica Association of Teachers has acknowledged receipt of the funds and have expressed their gratitude to us.

19. **WORLD TEACHERS' DAY**

October 5, 2015 will be celebrated as World Teachers' Day under the theme "***Empowering Teachers, Building Sustainable Societies***". The JTA is contributing twenty (20) plaques through the Jamaica Teaching Council to be awarded to deserving teachers.

20. **CONCLUSION**

The road ahead for education is predicted to be challenging but exciting, precipitous at times, yet filled with a ray of hope and limitless possibilities. Let us not just see the glass as half full but let us pledge to fill the glass with hope, positivity and adventure for all our learners. Let us be that model teacher that every student would like to have and let us be that professional every colleague can embrace and emulate.

May you have a great year as we ***Unite and Serve***.

**Prepared by: Byron Farquharson
Secretary General**