

Since this is the first issue of the *NBTA News* for this calendar year, I want to convey my best wishes to all of you for a healthy, happy and successful 2017.

Provincial Budget 2017

As you read this issue of the *NBTA News*, the Provincial budget has, or soon will be, released.

This government has repeatedly stated that education is a high priority item. The budget will tell us if they are ready to put their money behind their commitment to education as a priority. Increased investment in public education in the early years of this century led to a significant increase in student performance in literacy and numeracy. If the government is serious about improving student achievement, they will invest in a properly funded public education system.

Classroom composition and student learning conditions need to be addressed in a serious way. Teachers have to be allowed to do what they were hired to do - TEACH.

French Immersion

In my last message to you, I outlined the position of our Association with regard to the announcement of the French Immersion Grade One entry point. In this article I want to share some of the other points that we have been advocating on this topic:

- all students in New Brunswick should be provided with an educational opportunity to enhance first language skills with access to second language programming;
- teachers displaced by this change should remain in our system at the school level in order to help mitigate both class composition issues and to further enhance literacy and numeracy supports for students; and
- teachers who have a desire to improve their French language skills should be given the opportunity, financial support, and time to upgrade these abilities.

Regardless of which program students choose, all students have a right to equitable class sizes and a class composition conducive to learning. We ask Government to assure that all students and programs receive appropriate supports and opportunities.

Negotiations

Negotiating our next collective agreement continues. As you know, this is a very important file and the process continues to consume a lot of time, energy and resources. At the time of this writing, we last met on December 21, 2016 during which time presentations were made by both parties regarding the concerns and many issues surrounding both class composition and working conditions. Negotiating dates have been established through the end of April.

Speaking of negotiations, I am sure you have been following the developments in Nova Scotia with our sister organization, the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (NSTU). I had the opportunity to attend, along with colleagues from PEI and Newfoundland-Labrador, and support the NSTU at a major rally in early December. I was asked to speak at the rally and brought greetings



and words of support on behalf of NB teachers. Many NSTU teachers thanked me for our support. They are experiencing many of the same issues with regard to class composition, learning environment and workload. The sign that I carried is a message that I have been promoting since my Presidency began - **"RESPECT THE PROFESSION - LET TEACHERS TEACH"** - so it was very appropriate and meaningful for me.

Teacher Retirements

This is the time of year when some teachers consider retirement and all of the excitement that surrounds this life change. Many teachers find this decision challenging as they identify with being a teacher year-round. The good news is that once you become a teacher you are always a teacher, although in retirement there are no bells and schedules to follow. For those who are considering retirement, I would suggest that you contact our office and have a discussion about the details of this decision with our NBTA Staff for Teacher Welfare Services — Michael Ketchum and/or Melinda Cook.

NBTA Elections

This year NBTA members will elect a NBTA Vice-President in April for a one year term. The candidates will be traveling the province over the next couple of months to visit schools and teachers, to hear your concerns, and seek your support.

I ran in two NBTA elections and found it a very unique and exciting experience, to say the least. I was able to visit many schools and meet many teachers throughout the province. I witnessed first hand the great things happening in our schools. It was truly a great professional learning experience, allowing me to take back many good ideas to my school.

I sometimes received some tough questions or some disagreement with my point of view. Despite this, I enjoyed the experience as it allowed me to gain a better understanding of the many issues facing educators in this province. I hope that you will take the time to learn about each of the candidates, welcome them into your schools and vote accordingly. The winner will be your Vice-President, so it is your responsibility to become informed and vote.

NBTA Commercial

I would like to conclude by highlighting that NBTA developed a new commercial that recently appeared in theaters and on CTV. I would congratulate all those responsible for the in-house production; in particular Blake Robichaud, Morgan Sinstadt, our Communications Work Groups and all others who had a hand in the project. We have been receiving many positive comments and you can all view the commercial at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERYh06xPZrQ>

I wish you all well and please keep in touch.



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