

Julia McKay speech

My name is Julia McKay, and I am currently the principal of Kelsey Community School in The Pas, having taught in the Kelsey School Division since the early 1990s. As an active teacher and member of the Provincial Executive of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, I welcome the opportunity to share my views on Bill 45 and the pension issue.

As we know, the COLA problem goes back a couple of decades, when both the government and MTS leadership of the time ignored actuarial warnings that money going into pension was not matching the money going out. Full COLAs were being paid out until 1998 despite the fact that this was not sustainable. Most retired teachers did not contribute enough for their pension, and neither are current teachers today. These mistakes are real and unfortunate, but I know that the current MTS leadership is working hard to try to correct them *now*. The past is the past. What's important is that we are trying to address the oversights of yesterday, *today* and we are protecting the future.

Bill 45 is a step in the right direction. It will improve both current and future COLAs, without placing an additional burden on active working teachers. It will help raise COLA for retired teachers right off the bat, from 0.7% to 1.4%. The plan isn't perfect, but it's a significant start, and tries to be fair to everyone involved.

If nothing is done right now, COLAs will continue to be minimal, and the trend will continue into the future. The logistics are simple. Bill 45 provides a solution that will see real results today, and balances the needs of retired teachers, active teachers and the government. The pension issue ultimately affects everyone, and the plebiscite showed that the support for this Bill is there.

My eldest daughter is also a teacher, and I don't want her to have to pay for the mistakes of previous generations all at once. Active teachers cannot afford the cost of a full guaranteed COLA right now, it would be way too much money. Implementing Bill 45 would help set up a plan to keep moving forward on bettering COLAs for all in the future.

I feel that it is important to ensure that teachers who are in the profession and those who plan to join the profession have the best possible environment in which to educate the minds of the future. This includes knowing that one day, when they retire, they will be financially secure.

Bill 45 is in our best interests, and it's important that retired teachers and active teachers work together to support a realistic, balanced plan. Short-term solutions at this point would be harmful. Supporting Bill 45 is the logical way to begin a change for the better, for all of us.