

Margrose Madak  
Bill 45 Presentation

My name is Margrose Madak and I am a teacher in Winkler, Manitoba and the President of the Garden Valley Teachers' Association.

I am submitting my support for Bill 45 to the Committee and strongly urge that the government implement the amendments to our pension plan.

In my role as a local association President, I represent teachers at all stages of their careers, from first-year teachers to those colleagues who are in their last year before retirement. So we have a wide range of perspectives on the pension issue. We have also had many discussions about Bill 45 and the Sale Report.

When MTS asked for a plebiscite to be held on the Sale Report, our members wanted to make sure they had all the facts so that they could make an informed decision. We invited the MTS President, Pat Isaak, to come out to Winkler and talk to us and answer our questions about the COLA issue.

What struck me, and many of our members, was that this is not really a complex issue. When we looked at all the numbers—the contribution rates of the past, the benefit improvements and the actuarial warnings that went on for several years—it became obvious very quickly that the numbers just don't add up.

Pat described pensions as a balancing act. The money paid in and the money paid out have to balance. She also explained how our pension benefits had improved and full COLAs paid out without supporting those payments with contribution dollars.

It wasn't hard to see that, while the money going out was increasing, the money coming in was staying flat. It also wasn't hard to see how the sum total of those decisions twenty years ago has created a huge imbalance in our pension plan.

It appears that everyone agrees that those decisions twenty years ago are what got us into the difficulties that we are now facing. What we don't agree on is how to get out of those difficulties.

I've read all the material on both MTS's and RTAM's websites, and the printed material that has been sent to teachers. It seems to me that if we are trying to correct an imbalance, we will need to look at both the money in and the money out.

Active teachers will surely have to pay more to put our plan back on track. But the numbers we've seen that will be necessary to pay a full COLA, or even to guarantee a partial COLA, are just not affordable for us. It's not that active teachers aren't willing to share the burden, but there are limits to what young teachers can afford to pay. Frankly, we just can't afford to fix a twenty-five year problem all at once.

We also know that the money going out of our pension plan will continue to rise as people retire earlier and live longer. We know that the number of retired teachers keeps increasing while the number of active teachers hasn't increased at all in over a decade. This represents another imbalance we have to deal with.

It's really unfortunate that the decision makers didn't pay attention to the warnings in the past. And as I said earlier, as active teachers we are willing to do our share to help put our pension plan back on track.

The solution to this issue lies in putting our plan back in balance. That means that the needs of retired teachers who want more out of the pension plan must be balanced with the needs of active teachers who will put the money in.

We think that Bill 45 provides that balance, and we urge the government to pass this legislation.

I appreciate the opportunity to present my views to the committee.