

My name is Phil MacLellan and I'm a retired teacher.

I am writing to you today to show my support of the proposed changes to the Teachers' Pensions Act contained in Bill 45.

I take it for granted that we understand that in the last several years, COLA benefits have fallen short of the actual rate of inflation, and that as things stand, they are expected to continue at these low levels into the future. I believe that the changes proposed in Bill 45 will go a long way toward improving COLA for retired teachers in Manitoba.

As I understand it, the current bill arises -- and contains all the elements of -- a report flowing from meetings of a task force on teacher pensions. That group had representatives from Government, from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and from the Retired Teachers' Association. In support of their deliberations, those representatives had full access to pension plan information from TRAF itself, and no doubt hired actuaries and pension analysts as needed to provide advice and technical support.

I presume that those discussions allowed all those present to express their positions, ideas, suggestions, and opinions, and to examine the hard numbers that were relevant to same. The result of those discussions was the Sale Report, and the 8 recommendations of that report make up the Bill 45 that is being considered.

I suppose I'm left wondering. If all the people who have a stake in teacher pensions were at the table, and the report flows from those discussions, and the proposed legislation flows from that report, then what basis might there be for opposing the proposed legislation? Was there information that was falsified or not considered? Is anyone claiming that they were denied the right to speak, or denied the necessary technical information to inform a decision?

As someone who was not part of those discussions, I must confess myself very confused. If this Bill passes, my understanding is that it will make genuine improvements to COLA for retired teachers like me. If the proposed legislation does *not* pass, then I'm completely at a loss, because I think the only option at that point is "back to the drawing board". Which would mean, the same people go the same table with the same information, and yet are somehow expected to come up with a different answer. It's not as if there's some kind of "appeal process", or a different group of stakeholders we can ask. It's the same people. And to expect exactly the same people to use the same data and come up with a fundamentally different approach to the problem, well, it's nothing less than bizarre.

The proposed legislation is the best that several parties, working at the same table, were able to produce. It's time to put those recommendations in place, and move on.

Thanks you,

Phil MacLellan