

A child wearing a dark winter jacket, a black beanie, and a black face mask is standing in a snowy playground. They are holding a large orange hula hoop around a vertical wooden post. Other children and hula hoops are visible in the background.

THE MANITOBA Teacher

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021 VOLUME 99 NUMBER 4 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

OUTSIDE
IS IN

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THE MANITOBA Teacher

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P.4

From the President

P.5

Inside MTS



P.6

Tent classroom pilot project

Outdoor classrooms keep teachers and students safe this winter



P.22

Manitoba Theatre for Young People reimagines

MTYP works tirelessly to generate ideas to respond to COVID curveballs



P.14

Long-overdue changes needed to sex education

Committee seeks overhaul of sex and health education in Manitoba



P.8

MTS hears concerns from members & presidents

Major issues teachers and principals are facing in schools



FROM THE PRESIDENT

JAMES BEDFORD

I doubt New Year's celebrations this year were as exciting as in other years. The usual feeling of leaving the old behind and optimistically welcoming the new wasn't necessarily there. As a public school teacher in Manitoba there was not a great deal to look forward to in the month of January, with remote teaching at Grade 7 and above, and an uncertain teaching environment of blended learning at the grades below.

Always willing to accept support, we did not know what to expect from the province's brand new Remote Learning Support Centre, how rapid COVID-19 testing will work for teachers, and where teachers, on the front lines of delivering essential teaching to Manitoba's students, are in the vaccination cue.

If these decisions were up to your Society, you would have the answers. However, the Society doesn't make those decisions. And, as a union, our advocacy work doesn't always generate the desired results with this government. But that won't stop our advocacy nor impede our optimism.

There is optimism for the New Year. Internally, the past year has seen significant change within the Society. Yes, operational leadership has changed, but there has also been a fundamental shift in philosophy. Your provincial executive is functioning more transparently and accountably than I can ever recall. More time is taken for critical thought and discussion on issues than ever before. Our local presidents now design and lead Presidents' Council meetings to meet their needs. Responding to those same local leaders, regular presidents' check-in meetings occur so that we are talking with our local leaders far more regularly. Operational leadership have made considerable structural changes so that our staff are better able to meet the needs of members and to communicate with them. Our planning for a virtual but interactive 2021 Provincial Council meeting is underway. This planning has involved experienced members, local presidents, provincial executive and staff. None of these changes would be possible without an underlying commitment for a Society that is more transparent, responsive and accountable to its members.

Externally, we have spoken with the education minister and deputy minister more than ever before. We have continued our working relationships with our education partners, especially important in the context of COVID-19. We have continued our work with the Manitoba Federation of Labour through the partnership to defend public services and other initiatives. We have re-established a strong relationship with the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba and have jointly pursued initiatives to see more retired teachers safely return to classrooms this school year. And provincial executive is working on a long-term community investment plan to determine where our future community relationships need to occur.

I cannot predict everything that will happen in the upcoming year, a year in which this pandemic will continue, and in which we are likely to see the start of significant education reform through the release of the K-12 Education Review recommendations. What I will predict is that your Society will continue to improve accountability to you, our valued member, in every aspect of the work we do.

THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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INSIDE MTS LABOUR LEVERS AND LESSONS

DANIELLE FULLAN KOLTON, PH.D., GENERAL SECRETARY

In my December article (*Where is my Union?*), I described the tools that we use for advocacy and action: labour protocols and grievance action; member campaigns; and earned, owned, or paid media, to name a few. These levers range from private conversations and negotiations with school divisions, to repeated written appeals and consultations with government, to public campaigns, to legal action. We choose carefully and intentionally.

To the outside eye, our impact sometimes comes into question. Maintaining member confidence in your union is an important responsibility, so it is incumbent on us to share the *why* and *how* of our responses. They are anchored in a history of hard-won battles of members and staff alike, including increased maternity provisions (top-up pay and leave), safeguards for substitute teachers, and more prep time, to name just a few.

With increasing concerns about COVID working conditions, we have fielded member questions such as, “why aren’t we taking job action as a means of standing up for our rights?” or “can we stage a provincial ‘sick day’ for all teachers.” The short answer is that such action would be illegal. The long answer is, well, ... longer.

In 1956, teachers were removed from *The Labour Relations Act* (LRA) and provisions regarding the rights of teachers were placed in *The Public Schools Act* (PSA). Among a variety of changes related to teacher rights and contract bargaining within education, arbitration became the final dispute resolution mechanism, and strikes and lockouts were deemed illegal. This new legislation significantly altered the direction of education in several ways:

- The Manitoba Teachers’ Society was given the sole right to represent teachers;
- Teacher local associations were given the right to bargain;
- Teacher dismissals (tenure rights) were governed by the PSA; and
- Official MTS representatives were placed on a number of government committees and became established as the official representative of all teachers.

Flash forward to our displeasure with a number of COVID working conditions in 2020, and a strike or provincial ‘sick day’ would make the Society liable and subject to a variety of costly fines under the LRA. Employers would also have recourse against the union even if we did not authorize or organize a walkout. Arbitrators and courts have held that, for a union to defend itself from a claim for damages, union officers have a duty not only to merely refrain from instigating or promoting an unlawful stoppage of work, but to also take prompt affirmative action to actually prevent or end it. A variety of damages sought by the employer (in addition to fines) would be additionally costly. Finally, MTS members as employees of school divisions may be subject to discipline for participation in an unlawful strike.

So, what power do we actually have to influence change?

As we move forward in challenging times, four key actions – learned from our past and applied to our future - will make a difference in achieving better conditions and rights for teachers.

1. **Solidarity.** A house divided will fall and, frankly, that is a strategy in the union-busting agendas of austerity governments. Our success over the years has come from cohesion among locals, coordinated and sophisticated strategies, representation of all roles of educators, and robust communication. United voices are heard.

2. **Democracy and participation** are core values of a union, and members are our most valuable resource. Your voices matter. Your stories, input, and feedback inform our work and drive the narrative, and we count on you to stay connected to us and to one another. The strength of grassroots mobilization cannot be underestimated, and we want to create multiple entry points for member engagement. Remember: your information is our power.


3. **Political (not partisan).** Political action is different from partisan affiliation. To be political is to raise the profile of union, labour, justice, and public service policies and issues by being informed, paying attention, talking to others, and taking

action. Collective power and confidence builds bridges between the work that we do and the society that we live in and envision. Collectively, we cannot afford to be apolitical, especially with the prevailing policy and fiscal agendas.

4. **Action against Acts.** We must not be complacent about regressive and overtly anti-labour legislation that dismantles bargaining rights, erodes Charter values, devalues teachers, and threatens public services. Current examples include Bill 16 (*The Labour Relations Amendment Act*) which interferes with labour relations processes including rules around binding arbitration; threatens the composition of bargaining unit members; and adds costly, burdensome and unnecessary financial disclosure requirements; Bill 45 (*The Public Schools Amendment Act*) which obligates provincial bargaining arbitrators to consider the economic situation in Manitoba and the ability of the school division to pay when ruling on an award; and Bill 64 (tabled but undisclosed *Education Modernization Act*) reminiscent of the misguided and expensive consequences of *The Public Education Modernization Act* from decades past). This government also held bargaining hostage with Bill 28 (*The Public Services Sustainability Act*), which was recently ruled as unconstitutional, by attempting to levy wage freezes and elimination of the right to negotiate. Vigilance is critical.

Our work and action over a 101-year history tells the story of what we stand for, and these values continue to inform our action and identity as a union and professional organization. While our values anchor us, our strategies evolve in response to economy, policies, and landscape and also to remain relevant to our members.

The work we do as your union can sometimes be reactive, but we gain more of an advantage in being proactive which is why we aim to keep our “seat at the table.” I say this eyes-wide-open in recognition that there is a fine line between sitting at the table and being on the menu. Our labour levers and lessons guide us in important work and propel us forward in our service to you.

A large white tent is set up outdoors on a snowy day. Inside the tent, a teacher in a black puffer jacket and a brown beanie is standing with her back to the camera, facing a group of children. The children are wearing winter clothing and some are wearing animal-themed hats (like a pink pig and a purple cat). They appear to be participating in an activity. The tent is open on one side, and the ground outside is covered in snow. The text "A TENT SITUATION" is overlaid in large white letters on the left side of the image.

"The children are very excited to be in the tent and it creates a little intimate atmosphere for us. We are basically just taking what we would do outside in a huge space, and moving it into the tent, which has been nice on windy days."

- Mary Kirkwood, music teacher at École St. Germain

A TENT SITUATION

BY LINDSEY ENNS

While outdoor classrooms certainly aren't anything new, a tent classroom pilot project is helping keep teachers and students safe and warm this winter.

Throughout the pandemic, health officials have been encouraging Manitobans to spend more time outdoors, given the emphasis on physical distancing and good quality ventilation to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

With this in mind, Louis Riel School Division has been renting out large white canopy tents for teachers to use as outdoor classrooms for phys-ed and music. École Sage Creek School, École St. Germain and École Van Belleghem are all under the tent classroom pilot, which began in mid-November of last year.

"The children are very excited to be in the tent and it creates a little intimate atmosphere for us," said Mary Kirkwood, a music teacher at École St. Germain. "We are basically just taking what we would do outside in a huge space, and moving it into the tent, which has been nice on windy days."

Kirkwood uses a utility wagon to transport all of her gear to the two tents, which feature large openings for proper ventilation, and are located behind the school. She uses a headset microphone and portable speakers so all of her students can hear her and the music she's playing off of her phone. Kirkwood said none of this would have been possible without the support of their school division, school administrators and guidance from Jennifer

Engbrecht, the school's outdoor music education enthusiast.

"Everything Jennifer does when she teaches is done with a purpose," Kirkwood said. "Prior to the pandemic she had embraced outdoor opportunities for music learning with activities such as using the play structure as her classroom and the students made music using various instruments while having a lot of fun."

"Now that we have tents, students can stay outside so it changes up the interaction a little bit."

Due to COVID, students haven't been allowed to sing or play traditional instruments at the school. Instead, students have been spending their time moving, dancing, learning about body percussion and listening to music while improvising



"They've adapted just to the outdoors really well. We expected more challenges, but they're pretty resilient and now we're learning new ways to use them. We're making the best of a very hard situation."

- Daryl Fillion, phys-ed teacher at Sage Creek



and being creative. During a recent outdoor music class at the school, Grade 1 students, some of which kept their face masks on but weren't required to, followed along as Kirkwood danced to music while playing a handheld drum.

When asked what they like about music in the tents, students said the tents keep them "snuggly and warm," they also like the woodchips on the ground and that they have a lot more space to move around.

"We are still active music makers, without instruments and without our voice," Kirkwood said, adding her students have been very responsive to all of the changes. "Being outside is awesome ... and especially with the pandemic I feel safe teaching outside."

Daryl Fillion, a phys-ed teacher at Sage

Creek, said he never imagined he'd one day be teaching inside of a tent outdoors during a pandemic.

"I never expected the three of us to be wearing ski goggles ... and all bundled up," Fillion said with a laugh. "It's a creative idea."

Although it's been a very different and challenging school year, Fillion said he's amazed at how well his colleagues have banded together and adapted on the fly.

"We have three full-time gym teachers here so we're able to really bounce ideas off each other," he said, adding the tent classrooms have been a great addition to their school. "It's amazing how much warmer you can be in a tent ... it's just getting them out of the wind makes a huge difference."

"It's a nice reprieve from the elements."

He said the tents are also paving the way for students to spend more time learning outdoors safely.

"Because we're such a big school, the more we can be outside, the safer they are," he said.

During one of his recent phys-ed classes, students played scoop ball inside the tents and then moved outdoors to toss around some hula hoops. Fillion says his students have quickly adapted to the tents and are enjoying them.

"They've adapted just to the outdoors really well. We expected more challenges, but they're pretty resilient and now we're learning new ways to use them," he said. "We're making the best of a very hard situation."



ONE TEACHER, ONE JOB!

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

For the past few months MTS has been hearing from and soliciting concerns from general members and local presidents about what teachers and principals are facing in schools.

After a recent telephone town hall, more than 225 members left voice messages about personal and general issues they feel need to be addressed. Regular online meetings with local presidents have rounded out the picture.

Among the most common complaints is that divisions have teachers trying to teach in multiple classrooms at the same time.

One president said the rule must be “one teacher, one job.”

One example given was a teacher having to go back and forth between two classrooms and also being responsible for four students learning remotely. In the end, teachers are unable to give students in a class or online the attention they deserve.

A growing number of divisions have adopted this so-called duplex model where classes are split in two or three to achieve physical distancing, but the teaching is left to a single teacher. Educational assistants are often posted in the classes while the teacher is in the next classroom.

“Duplex teaching doesn’t work,” said one teacher. “The students feel abandoned by their teachers.”

The issue has been exacerbated to some degree as some students are in class while others are learning remotely from the same teacher.

One pointed out she was teaching some grades remotely and teaching other in-class students and having those classes live-streamed. She said her workload has more than doubled. Another said he was teaching an in-school class of 30 students and a remote class of 40.

In mid-January, the education department issued a directive that “classroom teachers should not be solely responsible for providing both in-class learning and remote learning if the learning is not delivered concurrently.”

Whether that eases the problem has yet to be seen. This does not appear to cover teachers moving between ongoing classes at the same time.

While many directives have been welcome, a major problem is how they are viewed in each division.

Many educators are upset that situations differ from division to division.

“Divisions are not interpreting (government) directives in the same way,” said a caller to the town hall. “Different divisions have different policies.”

For example, divisions have not been consistent in the numbers of teachers or EAs they have hired to reduce the burden on existing staff, leaving teachers with varying workloads across the province.

A number of callers and presidents pointed to differences among the 30 school divisions, some which have led to major increases in workload for teachers and difficult choices for principals.

One wondered whether the lack of government-mandated rules, and the obvious outcome, was to build a case for the amalgamation of school divisions. It is expected the government will announce a reduction in the number of school divisions in the coming months.

As well as concerns about the duplex models, the switching back and forth between remote and in-class learning has not gone smoothly for many.

A major complaint has been outdated or non-existent technology in many schools and uncertain internet connections in remote areas.

One teacher pointed out her 14-classroom school has only five web cams. Another said the computers in his school are 10 years old and incapable of doing what is necessary. Yet another said teachers have had to buy the necessary

software and hardware to properly teach remote students.

Many others complained there is little support for teachers struggling with technology and a lack of prep time for remote learning.

A growing number of divisions have adopted this so-called duplex model where classes are split in two or three to achieve physical distancing, but the teaching is left to a single teacher. "Duplex teaching doesn't work," said one teacher. "The students feel abandoned by their teachers."

And the problems aren't just facing teachers. A number mentioned that many students don't have the equipment necessary or knowledge to handle remote learning.

These issues were raised before the opening of the province's Remote Learning Centre, which is expected to address some of the

needs teachers have. The centre opened in mid-January.

One teacher summed up the comments by others: "Remote teaching is a problem. It shortchanges students."

The safety of students and teachers was questioned in many of the comments MTS has received.

One particularly sore point among specialist teachers was that they had to travel between various cohorts in a school. One phys-ed teacher pointed out they are teaching various cohorts every day. A resource teacher said she has been asked to substitute in classes involving more than one cohort.

Added to that has been the lack of information that teachers are given when there is a positive case in a cohort.

Other comments and concerns raised during meetings and the town hall have ranged from the need for rapid testing in schools, the need for better ventilation and what will the arrangement be for teachers to receive vaccinations?

MTS has taken almost all of these concerns to the government, looking for, and proposing solutions, to the government and the associations representing school boards and superintendents.



225 TOWN HALL VOICEMAILS

Out of the 225 voicemails left following our telephone town hall in November, dozens of teachers expressed concerns and issues surrounding remote learning.

Some teachers cited a lack of support for those struggling with technology issues, while others expressed a need for access to up to date and adequate technology for all students. Several teachers said remote learning in rural communities has been a real challenge.

Murray Campbell, who teaches industrial arts at Frontier Mosakahiken School in Moose Lake, which is part of the Frontier School Division, said since his community went into lockdown in early November he's been having trouble reaching his students. Campbell said the community relies heavily on satellite internet and it's very limited in terms of usage and access.

"It's a common issue for the community here, especially the teachers here," Campbell said when reached by phone on Dec. 14. "I have to try and teach ... I can't begin to imagine somebody having four or five kids, I mean the stress could build on a household because we depend on the internet so much."

More than 500 students attend Frontier Mosakahiken School and Campbell says he teaches around 130 students in Grades 6 to 12. He's been a teacher there for 10 years.

"I have to continue contacting them and look for material for all of them to try and keep them going and some of them can't respond because they don't even have internet or phone," he said, adding his biggest concern is his students falling behind. "They are the ones losing out."

Before the community went into lockdown, Campbell was printing out take home packages and bus drivers were delivering them to his students. But during their most recent lockdown, that hasn't been possible.

"It's not anybody's fault we just weren't prepared or anticipating this."

Despite these challenges, Campbell said he's been able to stay in touch with many of his students and he's been working with other teachers at the school to help send information to those he's been unable to reach.



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**Subject to change*

Discount program discontinued

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has discontinued its discount program.

The program, which offered discounts to members from various participating businesses, has not been well used.

A poll of Society members showed only about four per cent of members took advantage of the program.

MTS management determined that the inordinate staff time taken to keep the program up to date did not warrant continuing.

At the same time, other discount programs have been created, at least one of which includes discounts for teachers from Union Savings (See ad to the right).



NOTICE OF CALL

This notice is given in compliance with Bylaw II of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

The 102ND Annual General Meeting of the Provincial Council of The Manitoba Teachers' Society will be held virtually beginning at 9:00 a.m. on May 13, 14 and 15, 2021.

The Provincial Council consists of representatives named by Locals, Council of School Leaders and Les éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba plus the members of the current Provincial Executive. The number of delegates representing each association depends on the number of members in that association.

Danielle Fullan Kolton, PhD General Secretary



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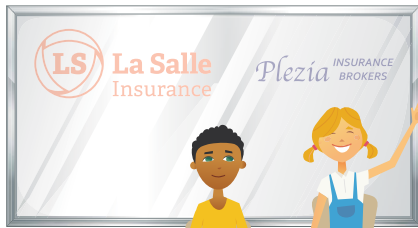
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PUBLIC POLL 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a drastic shift to the online world for many of the services and amenities we have come to rely on. One thing that has not changed is the importance of teachers and the high value the public places on education delivered in a classroom setting.

BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

In a recent public poll, commissioned by The Manitoba Teachers' Society and conducted by Viewpoints Research, 72 per cent of parents said that being in a classroom with a teacher and other students is the best place for their children to learn, regardless of COVID-19.

Three in four school-aged children are currently attending school, despite parental fear that they will contract the coronavirus. The majority of parents (59 per cent) are worried their child will contract the virus at school and rightly so. Less than three months into the school year more than half of parents (51 per cent) said there have been COVID-19 cases at their child's school.

Winnipeg residents (61 per cent), particularly those in suburban Winnipeg (65 per cent), were most likely to have had a COVID-19 case at their child's school, compared to central Winnipeg (54 per cent) or outside Winnipeg (34 per cent).

Furthermore, 82 per cent of parents said their child had been in self-isolation this school year from being in contact with a positive COVID case.

Eight in 10 parents said the government should be doing more to keep students safe at school. All Manitobans, even those without children in the public school system, share the sentiment that the government is not doing enough in schools. According to the poll, 27 per cent of respondents think the Manitoba government is doing a fair job while 46 per cent said they are doing a poor job responding to the needs of the education system due to COVID-19.

Overall, 46 per cent of respondents think the provincial government is doing a poor job managing the COVID-19 pandemic when compared with data from May 2020 (12 per cent).

The likelihood of thinking the provincial government is doing a poor job managing the COVID-19 pandemic is highest among central Winnipeggers (81 per cent) and those with school-aged children (82 per cent). Additionally, the majority of Manitobans think the government is on the wrong track overall (52 per cent), up 13 points since May 2020.

Nearly half (49 per cent) of respondents feel the provincial government is most responsible for problems facing Manitoba's public schools and perceptions the government is heading in the right direction when it comes to providing quality public education is down 14 points since 2019 to 39 per cent.

After four years of funding below the rate of inflation, 64 per cent of Manitobans favour an increase in education spending while almost none (four per cent) advocate cutting. It is not a stretch to say that many of the problems in our public schools, the majority due to the lack of funding, were compounded by the stress of the pandemic. Within the context of COVID-19, 79 per cent of respondents agree the provincial government should be spending more on education.

Support for increased education spending is highest in Winnipeg (68 per cent), particularly central Winnipeg (75 per cent), among women (74 per cent), 30 to 39 year olds (68 per cent) and those with children in public school (71 per cent).

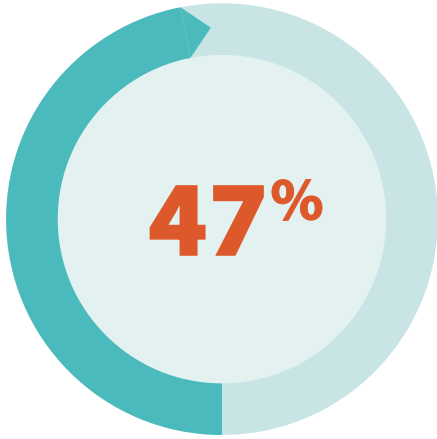
While government approval is waning, teacher approval is at an all-time high, with very favourable views of teachers increasing nine points to 56 per cent since May 2020. Almost nine in 10 Manitobans (87 per cent) have a favourable view of teachers.

Manitobans continue to look to teachers for reliable information on education. The view that teachers are a reliable source of information about education is up seven points to 80 per cent since May 2020. Conversely, views that Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen is a reliable source of information about education issues continues to diminish, now at 38 per cent, down seven points from May 2020, and 14 points from December 2019.

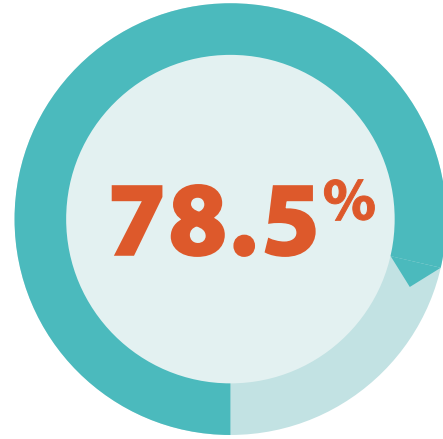
Trust in Premier Brian Pallister, a former teacher, as a reliable source of information about education issues is also at an all-time low (38 per cent), with a 16-point drop from December 2019.

This survey was conducted online between Nov. 25, 2020 and Dec. 4. It was completed by 1,067 Manitobans province-wide, of which approximately half had children in the public school system.

PERCEPTION OF THE GOVERNMENT



Almost half believe the government is doing a poor job of responding to the needs of the education system due to COVID-19



Almost 8 in 10 agree the provincial government should be spending more on education when it comes to Manitoba schools dealing with COVID-19 and responding to the needs of students and teachers

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS

87.2%

Have a favourable view of teachers



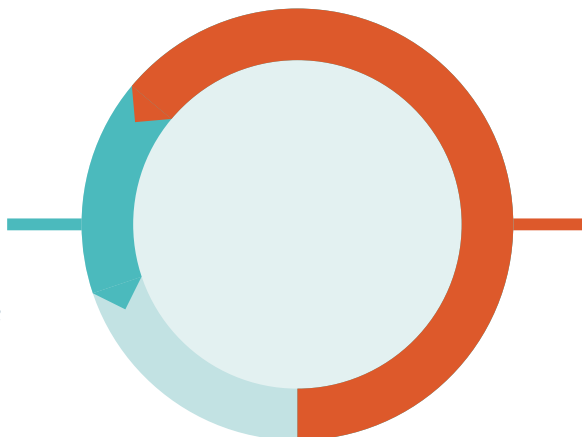
56.1%

Said very favourable; up nine points from the last poll

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

80%

Trust teachers on education issues; up seven points from the last poll



64%

Trust The Manitoba Teachers' Society

SEX ED

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BY LINDSEY ENNS

A seven-member committee of educators and members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) is gaining traction and support when it comes to advocating for long-overdue changes to sex education in Manitoba.

Catherine Hart, committee chair and provincial executive member, says the committee was created to devise a lobbying strategy and build support for changes to Manitoba's current curriculum, which hasn't been updated in 15 years.

The Comprehensive Sex and Health Education Ad Hoc Committee, formed after several resolutions were brought forward during a recent MTS AGM, met four times last year and has reviewed existing resources that outline best practices in sex education. Included has been Manitoba's Sexuality Education Resource Center's (SERC) submission to the province's Education Review Commission, the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada's (SIECCAN) "Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education," and CATIE,

Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information.

Some of the committee's recommendations so far include maintaining communication with the provincial government and building public support for comprehensive sex education as well as building consensus and cooperation with partners in education.

Another recommendation is educating and supporting MTS members, which includes creating curriculum support documents using SIECCAN guidelines and SERC documents, developing a workshop to educate members on SIECCAN guidelines for best practices in sex education and surveying members about how prepared and supported they feel to teach about consent.

Hart said the committee met with

Manitoba Education members in November, 2020 to share their mandate and request updates on any plans to update the current health curricula.

"All we heard was there are not plans to revise the sex ed and health curriculum at this time," Hart said.

Committee members also noted the importance of considering addictions in an intersectional manner and making consent part of the discussion, as alcohol and drugs are a way kids are pulled into human trafficking.

The state of sex ed in Manitoba

According to Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, the sex ed most young students in Canada receive is not meeting international standards and best practices. It's also not meeting the 2019 Canadian Guidelines for Sexuality Education since it is outdated, not comprehensive, not monitored or evaluated to ensure high-quality delivery, and is offered by educators who receive low to no support from provinces and educational systems and whose comfort levels are often low.

When sex ed is done right, it can be life changing for people and have significant positive impacts on public health, according to Action Canada's 82-page "State of Sex-Ed Report," which was posted in April, 2020.

In Manitoba, the current sex ed curriculum is taught within phys-ed and health education courses, under which the outcomes from K-10 are mandatory. The last full update to Manitoba's Physical and Health Education curriculum was in 2000, but in 2005, the province created a Human Sexuality resource for Grades 9-10.

The government also updated the Grade 12 phys-ed course to include sexual health content in 2009. The most updated document is a 2017 teaching resource created to support trans and gender diverse students, but this document is not part of the curriculum and isn't mandatory.

Pleasure and other positive aspects of sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, all pregnancy options as well as health information that is relevant to people who have diversity of identities, experiences and bodies are all currently not included content in Manitoba's curriculum.

Raising awareness

Although COVID-19 has forced the ad hoc committee to switch to virtual meetings and workshops, Hart says it hasn't changed what they are lobbying for.

"COVID has meant that people have to be more aware than they have ever been before that people may have different boundaries than they have."

In hopes of raising more awareness, the committee has switched its focus to planning virtual workshops and webinars this year that will be open to the public as well as MTS members. Their first digital workshop, which was very well attended Hart said, took place in November, 2020, and explored approaches to comprehensive sex education from K-12. The 90-minute interactive digital workshop was led by Erica McNabb, a community educator with 20 years of experience facilitating sexuality and mental health education for youth.

McNabb says Manitoba's current sex ed curriculum is outdated and in need of changes, especially when it comes to the type of language used. She says one example is how the curriculum talks about HIV and AIDS. It focuses a lot on AIDS and stigmatizing the transmission of these diseases, she explains.

"It really adds to the stigma to HIV when we don't have current good information," she said, adding she makes an effort to review

her work annually. "The most important part for us is the language changes."

There is currently nothing in the Manitoba curriculum that talks about unwanted sexual outcomes. Information about the benefits of sex and sexuality are also missing from these conversations, she said, adding Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, or actioncanadashr.org, is a great resource.

"Sex often gets constructed as this dangerous and scary thing," she said. "It's a little unfortunate. One of the things that's real about sexual education is that it can be really empowering, it can be reflective of a wide variety of experiences ... but what we see in the classroom often isn't that."

"The importance of having learning materials that reflect a wide variety of experiences is so important," she said, adding children need to know that queer families exist and become more informed about the transgender community. "We need to provide imagery, options and stories of people who are not just straight."

- Erica McNabb, community educator

"Sex and sexuality are deeply personal experiences."

McNabb says health and sex ed should be woven into the curriculum for nearly every grade level, instead of just being introduced at a certain age. Conversations about consent can start at a very early age, she says. For instance, children can be taught to ask other children before they touch or hug one other, which can help them practice saying "yes" and "no" as well as setting boundaries.

"The importance of having learning materials that reflect a wide variety of experiences is so important," she said, adding children need to know that queer families exist and become more informed about the transgender community. "We need to provide imagery, options and stories of people who are not just straight."

One thing teachers can do is seek out books for the classroom that look beyond the typical stories we see, she said. This can help build better gender inclusion into story times and is an opportunity to teach children about pronouns and asking people what they would like to be called.

"Just have to be human about it. The being human thing is really important when we're talking about sex and sexuality."

McNabb believes sex ed and consent should be taught early and ongoing.

"It's way easier to start when they are little. They are so open and so understanding and compassionate and they want everyone to feel inherently included. That's one of the great gifts of small children," she said. "It can be really powerful."

Next steps

Lindsay Brown, of the Seven Oaks Teachers' Association and ad hoc committee member, says they want to see consent part of the curriculum.

"Part of the work of the committee is also to ensure that we are thinking about things like consent and boundaries and healthy relationships as part of what a comprehensive sex model could look like and then it can be done across grades," Brown said. "We don't all have to be health teachers ... but there are ways to think about sex education as comprehensive and cross-curricular."

Brown says one teacher shouldn't be responsible for teaching sex ed to students, instead it should be cross-curricular, involve input from community organizations and include more inclusive conversations.

"Think of health and sexual education in a broader scope," Brown said. "How can we support teachers in understanding that there are ways we can be progressive in our ways of thinking or talking about consent and relationships and healthy self image and all of these components can be a part of any course and should be a part of any course."

Brown says a lot of their energy has now shifted to their outreach and education through online webinars and workshops. There is a lot of support already for comprehensive sex ed across Canada, Brown added.

McNabb says the committee is moving in the right direction.

"MTS has been doing a lot of good work in terms of monitoring and advocating on some of the bigger problems in Manitoba's sex ed curriculum," she said. "It really hasn't stayed up to speed with the broader best practices of the field of sexual education."

Mental health drops again

STORY BY LINDSEY ENNS

Canadians are struggling with their mental health more now than they were at the beginning of the pandemic, according to Morneau Shepell's latest Mental Health Index.

The findings show that worsening psychological health, depression and workplace productivity continue to impact the mental wellbeing of Canadians.

"While most of the population has adjusted to new work environments and physical distancing, ongoing economic uncertainties and anxieties related to work and personal life continue to plague Canadians," said Stephen Liptrap, president and CEO of Morneau Shepell. "Our collective mental health is at significant risk. It has never been more critical to make a conscious effort to support ourselves and each other and for employers to emphasize mental health and physical health equally in order to ensure employees feel heard and supported as the pandemic continues."

The Mental Health Index score for December is -11.8, declining from November (-11.1). The score measures the improvement or decline in mental health from the pre-2020 benchmark of 75. The index also tracks sub-scores against the benchmark, measuring financial risk (3.2), psychological health (-3.6), isolation (-12.0), work productivity (-12.4), anxiety (-13.0), depression (-13.9) and optimism (-14.1).

When compared to the previous month, all sub-scores decreased except for financial risk, which has improved by 0.3 points since November. Optimism, isolation and general psychological health have worsened the most through the past nine months with a decrease of 1.8 points for optimism, 1.4 points for isolation and 3.3 points for psychological health when compared to April 2020. Financial risk continues to be the strongest of all sub-scores and is currently above the pre-2020 benchmark.

Canadians are also seeing the pandemic's impact on others, including their co-workers. Overall, 36 per cent of respondents report being concerned about a co-worker's mental health, 35 per cent of supervisors indicate concern about the mental health of employees and 27 per cent report that their



"Our collective mental health is at significant risk. It has never been more critical to make a conscious effort to support ourselves and each other and for employers to emphasize mental health and physical health equally in order to ensure employees feel heard and supported as the pandemic continues."

- Stephen Liptrap, president and CEO of Morneau Shepell

employees are less productive than in 2019. This suggests that the Canadian workforce may be at risk of detrimental long-term mental health effects.

Due to ongoing non-essential travel restrictions, nearly half (46 per cent) of respondents report not using all their vacation time in 2020, compared to 36 per cent using all of their vacation time. This is a significant factor in terms of employee mental health, as individuals without paid time off have the lowest mental health score (-12.6) when compared to those who are using all their vacation time (-12.0) and those who are not using all their vacation time (-10.9).

"At a granular level, productivity levels are actually decreasing. Putting in more hours results in less time for rest and self-care and the moment those stop being a

priority, employee mental health suffers – as do business bottom lines," said Paula Allen, global leader and senior vice president, research and total wellbeing. "This demonstrates that employee wellbeing must be a priority in order to ensure sustainability and ultimately, business continuity."

The monthly Mental Health Index by Morneau Shepell, a provider of total wellbeing, mental health and digital mental health services, was conducted through an online survey in English and French from Nov. 20, 2020 to Nov. 30, with 3,000 respondents in Canada. All respondents reside in Canada and were employed within the last six months. To view the full report, visit <https://www.morneaushepell.com/permafiles/93200/mental-health-index-report-canada-december-2020.pdf>.

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To register for one of these seminars, email your name, address and phone number to info@rtam.mb.ca or call 204-889-3660 or 1-888-393-8082 (toll free) by February 19, 2021.

We look forward to your attendance at one of these seminars.



Students learn where our food comes from and how it gets to our plates.

This year, CALM is going **completely virtual!** There will be no classroom visits for 2021 and instead teachers will receive:

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- **Healthy Food from Healthy Farms** student activities (FR/EN)
- AITC-M produced video of Manitoba farmers and processors (EN)
- And a teacher guide to shape your lesson (EN)

**If students are learning at home, it can all be done at a distance!*



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- Cost:** Free

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aitc.mb.ca

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The provincial government has introduced two bills that will change the face of labour relations in Manitoba, for teachers and all unionized employees.

The first, Bill 45 – *The Public Schools Amendment and MTS Amendment Act* changes the way that teachers bargain by moving from the current system of local bargaining to a single-tier model of provincial bargaining.

Bill 45 incorporates the division's ability to pay into the arbitration process, which is cause for concern as it impedes the neutrality of an arbitration board.

The second piece of anti-labour legislation is Bill 16 – *The Labour Relations Amendment Act*. It threatens the destruction of fairness, respect and equity in the labour relations process by stripping unions and workers of basic rights to organize and collective bargain.

Members are encouraged to voice their concerns over these bills. MTS has already made a submission, outlining its opposition to Bill 16, calling on the government to withdraw this legislation and will be making an in-person presentation to the committee on Bill 45.

The following information explains the legislative process and provides tips and information on presenting your case to the bill committee.

LIFECYCLE OF A BILL

Drafting Stage

A government bill is drafted by the staff of the Department of Justice. The draft bill is then presented by the minister to his colleagues in cabinet and caucus for their approval.

A private member's bill (from the opposition) is drafted by the member with the assistance of the staff of the Legislative Assembly.

Notice

Notice of a bill's intended introduction must appear on the Notice Paper one day prior to its introduction.

Introduction and First Reading

The bill is read a first time and introduced in the House.

Second Reading

Second reading is considered the most important stage in the passage of a bill. At this stage, the principle and object of the bill are debated and either accepted or rejected.

Committee Stage

After a bill has passed second reading, it is referred to a Standing or Special Committee (comprised of members selected from both sides of the House) or to a Committee of the Whole House (comprised of all members.) At this stage, members of the public may present oral and written submissions concerning proposed bills.

Report Stage

At this stage, the House considers a bill that has been considered by a committee, and reported - with or without amendments. Members may propose further amendments to specific bill clauses.

Concurrence and Third Reading

The motion at this stage is "that the bill be now read a third time."

When a bill has been read a third time, the further question is then put by the Speaker: "This bill having had three separate readings, is it the pleasure of the House that it does now pass?"

This is carried, and the bill is then ready for Royal Assent.

Royal Assent

To become law, a bill that passes all stages in the House must receive Royal Assent from the Lieutenant Governor.

Proclamation

A bill comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent, unless a date is specified in the bill.

PRESENTING TO A BILL COMMITTEE

Once the bill receives first reading, members of the public have the opportunity to speak against the bill or offer support, as well as propose amendments before it becomes law.

Presentations can be written (a letter or an e-mail) or can be oral (you can speak at a public hearing). It is important to note that both types of presentations are considered equal by the committee, however in-person presentations have the added benefit of being attended by media which can help amplify your voice and create greater public awareness on the issue.

Oppose or Support a Bill

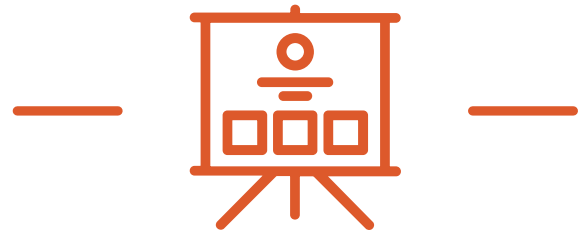
Members of the public can provide a written submission or make an in-person presentation to the committee responsible for a specific bill. This is your opportunity to say what you like, dislike, or would change about the bill.

Making an oral presentation

You must register to make an oral presentation by calling the Office of the Clerk (204) 945-3636. You will be asked for the following registration information:

- the presenter's name, address, contact information;
- whether the presenter is a private citizen or is speaking on behalf of an organization; and
- the name and number of the bill.

Each presenter is allowed a maximum of 10 minutes to make an oral presentation, and an additional five minutes to respond to questions from members of the committee.



Notice of Meeting

There is no way of knowing how far in advance a committee meeting will be scheduled. If presenters are registered to speak to a bill, two calendar days' notice must be given during sittings of the Legislature of the first meeting considering the bill.

Intersessionally, ten days' notice is required for the first meeting, and five days' notice for subsequent meetings.

Once the Government House Leader has called a meeting, presenters are contacted by the Office of the Clerk and informed of the meeting's date, time and location.

Written Submissions

If you prefer to send a written submission on the bill, you can do so anytime following the first reading to:

Clerk of Committees
Room 251 – 450 Broadway
Winnipeg MB
R3C 0V8

You may also fax your submission to **(204) 945-0038**, or send it by email to: **committees@leg.gov.mb.ca**.

Written submissions must be received before the committee considering the bill concludes its deliberations so that it may be provided to committee members.

What happens next?

Once a committee considers a bill, the chairperson reports all findings to the House. The report stage, concurrence and third reading, and Royal Assent follow this.

SPEAK OUT ON BILL 45

What is Bill 45

Bill 45 –The Public Schools Amendment and MTS Amendment changes the way that teachers bargain. It moves teachers from the current system of local bargaining to a single-tier model of provincial bargaining.

Concerns over Bill 45

Bill 45 incorporates the division's ability to pay into the arbitration process. This impedes the neutrality of an arbitration board. More troubling, this clause is reminiscent of legislation enacted in the 1990s (Bill 72), which undermined teacher collective bargaining.

This bill also stipulates that arbitrators must also consider the economic situation in Manitoba when making a ruling and will be required to specifically state how these considerations were applied.

It is important to note that under this bill the arbitrator has no obligation to explain the rationale for any other aspect of the award. This bill would force the arbitrator to disclose financial implications but not any other implications on the working conditions of teachers or students.

Providing a one-sided explanation is unfair. If the arbitrator is required to justify some aspects of the award, then the arbitrator should be required to justify all aspects of the award.

Key messages

The following points can be used in written submissions and in-person presentations to illustrate the concerns over Bill 45.

1. As a teacher, my main objection is the ability to pay provision in the bill. I am concerned that this definition does not address real ability to pay; rather it defines ability in terms of what a school board and the province are willing to spend.
2. A critical piece of a fair system of bargaining is an open, unbiased, independent arbitration process. Since arbitration is the only dispute resolution process available to teachers, it is imperative that this process remains virtuous.
3. As long as the definition of ability to pay is not changed, these provisions effectively remove teachers' right to bargain collectively and replace this right with the employers' ability to impose salaries and working conditions under the guise of bargaining.
4. The ability to pay provision will further erode teacher salaries and working conditions to the point where attracting new teachers will become extremely difficult.
5. Teachers have not received any wage improvements in almost four years due to Bill 29 freezing the wages of all public servants.
6. COVID-19 has added significant challenges to the education system and its effects will be felt for many years to come. This provision will negatively impact the public system at a critical juncture.
7. The continuing downward pressure on salaries and working conditions will make teaching an undesirable profession, compromising retention and recruitment efforts.
8. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher workloads have increased significantly and burnout is on the rise. Nearly 50 per cent of educators responded to a MTS poll that they have seriously considered retiring.
9. The public education system is already under stress when it comes to the availability of qualified, certified teachers. Teachers leaving the profession or retiring early would lead to a dramatic teacher shortage.
10. Education is an investment that pays for itself in the long-run. Refusal to pay teachers competitive wages compromises the value and quality of public education and the future of our province.



TIPS FOR WRITING A SUBMISSION OR MAKING A IN-PERSON PRESENTATION

There is no set format for a submission to a bill committee, but whether you are doing an in-person presentation or a written submission here are a few tips to follow:

- 1. Introduce yourself.**
A simple phrase such as “My name is John Gomez and I have spent the last 20 years teaching at Gillis School,” creates a mental image, which brings you and your point alive.
- 2. Clearly state your concern.**
For example, “I am concerned that the ability to pay clause in Bill 45 will negatively impact our public education system because it will erode teacher salaries and working conditions.”



- 3. Be specific.**
It improves the effectiveness of your presentation/submission. Focus on what the issue is specifically about, and what you think about the details proposed.
- 4. Get the facts right.**
You do not have to have all of the facts, but the ones you put in your submission/use in presentation must be correct.
- 5. Use plain language.**
Avoid jargon.
- 6. Make a recommendation.**
Tell the committee what you think it should do, or what you think should change.
- 7. Written Submission**
Include a cover letter, even if you are sending an email. If sending your submission by email, ensure it is saved as a PDF.
For samples on how to format a cover letter and a submission please go to **mbteach.org**.

BY ANNE BENNETT

MTYP Pivots WITH THE PANDEMIC

As the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered live theatre venues around the world, empty seats and cancelled programs became the norm. Manitoba Theatre for Young People (MTYP) was no exception, yet in the midst of chaos, the award-winning company for children and young adults found ways to reimagine its offerings and even learn a thing or two to enhance them in the long term.

"The essence of theatre is bringing people together to share a story," says Pablo Felices-Luna, MTYP artistic director. "Yes, there are ways to share stories that don't involve presence, but theatre itself thrives on that. Being unable to gather strikes at the core of who we are and what we do. So we have looked for ways to prepare for the time when we will be reunited with audiences, when artists will be able to share their work with young people, and the adults—such as teachers—who connect them with theatre."

Felices-Luna and his team employed no small amount of "theatrical ingenuity" to map out a play-friendly pandemic plan. Collaborating with guest companies to produce work locally, developing new plays online, shifting classes and workshops to digital and outdoor platforms, and running cohorted theatre camps over the

summer formed part of the picture, as did laying the groundwork for the next—and shorter—theatre season.

MTYP has worked tirelessly to generate as many ideas or scenarios as possible to respond to each new COVID curveball.

"The essence of theatre is bringing people together to share a story. Yes, there are ways to share stories that don't involve presence, but theatre itself thrives on that. Being unable to gather strikes at the core of who we are and what we do. So we have looked for ways to prepare for the time when we will be reunited with audiences."

- Pablo Felices-Luna, MTYP artistic director

"There has been a lot of throwing metaphorical spaghetti at the wall," the artistic director laughs, "but this wall is devious and keeps moving when you least expect it."

Despite the challenges, the year that has shed light on new ways of working that may prove valuable. Digital classes have increased access to programs for young people living beyond Winnipeg, and play development online has expanded the pool of artists with whom the company can collaborate; something Felices-Luna describes as "freeing".

"It has also heightened our awareness of the importance of staying in touch with artists and audiences, even during down times. That is something we will definitely carry forward."

The process of planning and executing theatre programming during a pandemic required the company to root itself in positivity and optimism, says Felices-Luna. Another priority was maintaining and strengthening contact with key supporters, such as public school teachers.

"Our Drama Outreach program is working to deliver online programming that supports curriculum, or tailor it as needed, always with the awareness that we need to respond to the needs of teachers. We know it is incredibly complicated to teach in these times, so we want to support rather than hinder the work of educators."

MTYP was quick to adapt its program in 2020, reworking what would have been a seven-show season to six, as travel restrictions scuttled plans for touring



Parachute
Photo credit: Leif Norman



Mamma Mia
Photo credit: Leif Norman



PLE
Photo credit: Leif Norman

companies to perform. At this point, with ongoing pandemic restrictions, only two of the remaining shows are scheduled.

The murky nature of the path forward notwithstanding, optimism remains a mainstay of the MTYP mindset.

“Our Drama Outreach program is working to deliver online programming that supports curriculum, or tailor it as needed, always with the awareness that we need to respond to the needs of teachers. We know it is incredibly complicated to teach in these times, so we want to support rather than hinder the work of educators.”

- Pablo Felices-Luna, MTYP artistic director

“The stories that need to be told will continue to be told,” says Felices-Luna. “The pandemic hasn’t eliminated any of the underlying social issues we want to explore with audiences, nor has it wiped

out all the joy we want to share with them. I know at times this may have felt like a joyless stretch of time, but in my experience, the ability to find laughter in some of the strangest places is one of the great gifts artists have to share.”

Educators are an essential component of the MTYP family, he says, and every effort will be made to ensure that as teachers explore new ways of communicating with their students, theatre forms a reliable, effective tool to promote dialogue and engagement.

Characterizing the relationship between MTYP and teachers in a perfectly theatrical way, Felices-Luna cites an excerpt from the 2019 run of a favourite production: A Year with Frog and Toad. “Just replace “Toad” with “teachers” and “Frog” with “MTYP,” he begins.

“Dear Toad, today when you told me that you were sad because you had never received a letter, it made me sad too. I suppose that is how it is with you and me. I am writing this letter, hoping that it will make you feel happy, knowing along that unless you are happy I cannot be. Your friend, Frog.”

For more information, check out MTYP’s educator portal at <https://mtyp.ca/2020-2021-season/educators>

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PORTFOLIO

OUR *plastic world*

Washing synthetic clothes in Europe and North America is the likely cause of plastic pollution in the Arctic, new research has found.

The study found microplastics in 96 of 97 sea water samples taken in the far north. More than 92 per cent were fibres and 73 per cent of these were made of polyester, the same width and colours of those used in clothes.

An earlier study determined: "the average household in Canada and the U.S. releases 533 million microfibers – or 135 g – from laundry into the wastewater treatment system every year. Following wastewater treatment, that adds up to a collective release by households in both countries of 3.5 quadrillion (3.5×10^{15}) microfibers – or 878 tonnes – to the aquatic environment (freshwater and ocean). That's the equivalent weight of 10 blue whales – every year."

2020: Curtain call's over; **just go away**

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON



That magical turn of the clock, when one year becomes the next, brimming with hope and enthusiasm seems to be taking a while to kick in.

So far, this year seems to look a lot like the last.

Vaccinations were the brightest light on that far hilltop, but have seemed to have rolled out at the pace of a square tire. But, hope springs eternal that most of the herd will be vaccinated before some newer strain of the virus appears, keeping us on the curb.

The number of positive cases in Manitoba took a jump at the beginning of the year, making clear that friends and families exchanged more than gifts during the holidays. Some 500-plus positive cases and thousands of close contacts were traced back to holiday gatherings of up to two dozen people.

It underscored how important it is that students today get the best education possible. We obviously need more people in Manitoba who can count.

As far as education goes, teachers were back in school and students were still here, there and everywhere; online, offline, in line, back of the line. Find 'em and teach 'em was the divisional dictate.

Politicians across Canada showed they too need some extra schooling. One story followed the next about politicians and their aides who weren't astute enough to understand public health pleadings to not travel.



GAMES BEFORE GRIEF

The launch of PlayStation 5 received 26 times more news attention than 10 humanitarian crises combined in 2020, says a Care International report.

Care examined news of crises in countries such as Guatemala, Madagascar and New Guinea. Aside from the PlayStation 5 avalanche, the Eurovision song contest and Kanye West's bid for the U.S. presidency received 10 times more coverage than the 10 humanitarian disasters.

The lack of media coverage adds to existing burdens for the 10 countries in crisis, including the effects of pandemic restrictions and the growing impact of climate change, said Care's humanitarian advocacy coordinator and UN representative Delphine Pinault.

DRESS CODE RED

A Muslim girl in England was sent home from school because her dress was – too long.

The school has a dress code stating shorter, school-branded skirts, must be worn, Siham Hamud's parents say short skirts contravene the family's religious beliefs and won't accede to the school's demands.

So, the school has threatened to sue the parents for the daughter's alleged, unauthorised absences. Siham, sent home from school every day in December, says she feels bullied for her beliefs.

Once they were caught, they acknowledged their mistake. A simple mistake, like making a wrong turn in your car. True. Who among us can say that they've never gone to the store for milk, gone astray at the first corner and ended up in the Bahamas?

Their excuses ranged from visiting sick relatives to selling a house in California. All essential for me, but not for thee.

It's almost Shakespearean: A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. And they wonder why the public distrusts politicians.

A few lost their jobs, some lost their political responsibilities and others were admonished with a nod and a wink. At first Alberta Premier Jason Kenney saw nothing wrong with his colleagues defining 'privilege' for the great unwashed. When the backlash built, he decided he should change his mind. And they wonder why the public distrusts politicians.

Then again, there are those who have absolute trust in politicians who are allergic to the truth.

Those folks used their holiday hangovers to launch the Mouth-Breathers Rebellion at the U.S. Capitol Building in defence of the CEO of lying as a growth industry, Donald Trump. Arriving after a visit to the local flag store, this clown posse, bedecked in camouflage, fur hats and face paint, waved their Confederate banners (in the birthplace of the Union), Trump and Gadsden (don't

tread on me) flags. Tiring of waving them, they used them as weapons, beating police, killing one.

It was ComiCon for the jackbooted.

Of course some in Trump's circle were shocked! Yes, shocked! In fact they were so shocked, after four years of anointing Trump's feet, they resigned in protest. There they were, jumping off the Titanic as the last funnel sunk beneath the waves. And they wonder why the public distrusts politicians.

Naturally Trump watched it all on TV as authorities wondered if they'd have to bring in SWAT and hostage negotiators to get him out of the White House. Unlike in the movies, where the power is cut off to bring out barricaded suspects, Trump's Twitter feed was disabled, a more modern and devastating approach.

So, the first month of the New Year unspooled. We were told that we weren't out of the woods yet, even if the thought of a walk in the woods seemed far more peaceful than what lay beyond.

We were told that there is a light at the end of the tunnel that isn't the one you supposedly see before shuffling off this mortal coil.

That's good news.

And if you can't believe our leaders, who can you believe, even if they show we aren't all in this together?



Hey, MAN, Thanks

A single, determined man can move mountains – even if it wasn't his intention.

Parisian Ralph Zurmély was so incensed by a recently published book, "I Hate Men", that he fired off a strongly worded complaint to the publisher. He said the book, which he hadn't read, was an "ode to misandry" and a "sex-based incitement to hatred" and threatened legal action if the book wasn't withdrawn from the publisher's catalogue.

Up to that point, the small publisher had printed but 400 copies. Once Zurmély's letter became public, the publisher couldn't keep up with demand. A large publisher bought the rights and it has sold 20,000 copies. It is being translated into 17 languages and HarperCollins will be releasing it in North America.

The book has been described as a feminist essay, which makes a case for shunning men as a legitimate defense mechanism against widespread misogyny.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?
I'D LOVE TO HELP.
REACH ME AT [RJOB@MBTEACH.ORG](mailto:rjob@mbteach.org)

REFRESH

BY RAMAN JOB, PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR

HITTING PAUSE & REFRESH ON YHA



The MTS Young Humanitarian Awards has been a gem in the Society's public events calendar and a symbol of public school pride since 1997.

We've highlighted the humanitarian works of students from K-12 across Manitoba; inspired students to continue on to careers in law, teaching and more; and brought pride and inspiration to parents, communities, schools and school divisions.

We've also spotlighted hundreds of talented public school singers, dancers and musicians on the YHA stage, including well-known performers Faouzia and Sierra Noble. The awards have garnered a healthy share of positive media attention for more than 23 years.

But now it's 2021 – and time to hit pause.

Last April, pandemic restrictions shut down opportunities for a live YHA ceremony. They threaten to do the same in 2021. Code orange and red restrictions have scaled back opportunities for students to serve directly in their schools and communities.

Perhaps more than that, declining nominations in recent years have inspired the Society to take a breath to rethink how best to recognize and help students with their humanitarian dreams.

So while the YHA committee will meet this year, it will suspend the award presentations for 2020-2021 and re-assess and re-evaluate the YHA's fundamental purpose, look at terms of reference and propose future directions.

"Looking for a refresh on the Young Humanitarian Awards is a smart thing to do right now," says MTS president James Bedford. "I'm really excited by the possibilities and eager to see the results of the committee's work."

"What if instead of simply recognizing public school students for work they've already done, the Society helped them make change?" asks Sonja Blank, chair of this year's Young Humanitarian Awards Committee. "What if MTS could be a workshop hub and resource centre for them?"

Blank was "blown away" by three public school students who organized the massive 2019 Climate Change rally at the Manitoba Legislature.

Iona Taylor, Courtney Tosh, and Sunny Enkin Lewis – now respective graduates of Collège Louis Riel, Miles Macdonell and Grant Park High school – came to McMaster House to speak at the Society's ESJ Chair workshop last February shortly before the pandemic hit.

"I was moved beyond words by how passionate and articulate these young women were and by the influence social justice issues had on their lives," said Blank. "It brought one of them out of despair and hopelessness into a sense of purpose."

"That's the story of all of us," said Courtney Tosh, who's attending the University of Winnipeg and planning on an environmental or political career. She likes the idea of teachers and students working together to deliver social justice workshops to students from various schools.

So does Sunny Lewis. "Not every student has access to a teacher who can mentor them in social justice issues. Many students haven't heard of programs that would really benefit them. It would also be a way to build community among like-minded students from different schools."

Whether an awards component should stay or go was unclear in the graduates' minds. But one thing both agreed on was that teachers and students should plan and deliver content together should the Society follow that route.

Have ideas you'd like the YHA committee to consider? Send them to YHA@mbteach.org.

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MTS Women in Educational Leadership Symposium



Alexa
Joy



Dr. Betsy
McGregor

The Manitoba Teachers' Society is proud to host the annual Women in Educational Leadership (WEL) Symposium in advance of International Women's Day.

The **2021 WEL Virtual Symposium** will feature recognized leaders representing a variety of fields including education, law, community activism, business and communications.

Friday Evening March 5, all day Saturday, March 6

This year, the Society has partnered with EventMobi, a virtual conference platform, promising to provide opportunities for video-networking and more!

Information about registration and all of the symposium's speakers and panelists will be updated on the MTS website in February.



**WOMEN
IN EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP**