

THE MANITOBA

Teacher

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 VOLUME 98 NUMBER 4 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



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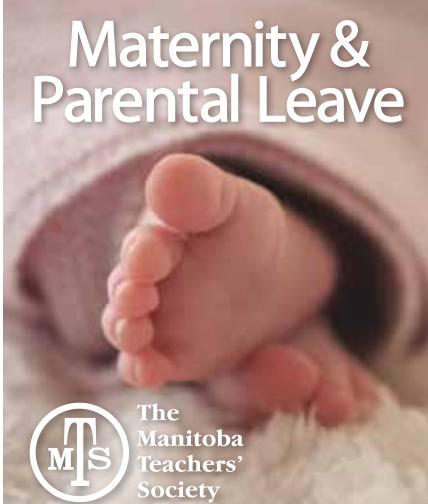


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The Manitoba Teachers' Society



The
Manitoba
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The Manitoba Teachers' Society
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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 VOLUME 98 NUMBER 4 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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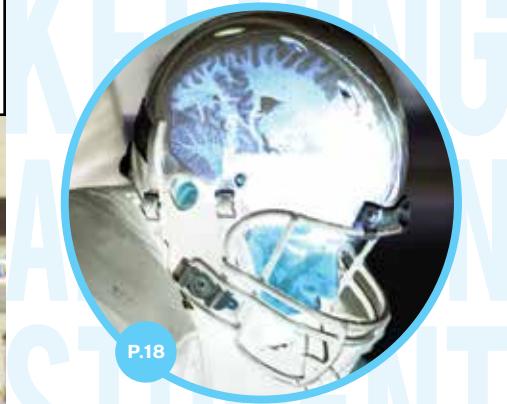
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FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

JAMES BEDFORD

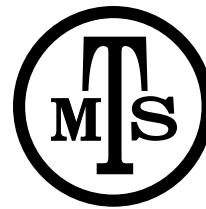
Three significant events for Manitoba Teachers' Society members occurred in 2019; the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education, the legal challenge to the Public Services Sustainability Act (PSSA) and the Interest Arbitration between the Louis Riel Teachers' Association and School Division. We await the outcome of each one, and each will affect every member of the Society.

The Commission held consultations and public hearings during the spring of 2019 with many citizens and organizations making representations, including the Manitoba Teachers' Society. You can find our submission on our website. It contains recommendations that reflect concrete concerns of members on class size and curriculum, as well as societal concerns that address poverty and the mental health. We also made recommendations reflecting the composition of our membership and teacher professionalism. We have no idea if our recommendations will be adopted, but in the spirit of improving public education in Manitoba, we trust that they will be.

In response to the PSSA (or Bill 28) we accepted the invitation to join with 27 other public sector unions, under the leadership of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, to challenge the constitutionality of the Act. The challenge was heard in court in November and December with concluding arguments coming in February. A decision will likely follow within a few months. We challenged the PSSA because we believe that it has destroyed meaningful collective bargaining, effectively removing our ability to negotiate fairly with our employers on your behalf.

Connected with the legal challenge of the PSSA is the Louis Riel Interest Arbitration. Because there was no chance of the parties negotiating a fair agreement at the bargaining table under the cloud of the PSSA, interest arbitration was invoked. In Manitoba, public school teachers do not have the right to strike or to withdraw services nor does the employer have the right to lockout employees. Decades ago, that right was negotiated away for the guarantee of independent binding arbitration. Very simply, each party presents its package and supporting information to a panel of three knowledgeable arbitrators. The panel makes a determination, binding on both parties. It is an involved, time consuming, thorough process, but schools remain open, and the result should be fair and reasonable. However, to work for everyone, the arbitration process must be fair and impartial, not a rubber stamp for government policy, and our concern on a go forward basis is that the PSSA would destroy that impartiality.

I believe that 2020 is going to be a pivotal year for the Society and its members. We do not have a crystal ball to predict what changes are going to occur. The one thing that will not change is the commitment of the Society, its staff and its leadership, to stand firm in representing you and to work hard on your behalf no matter what the future has in store. Because you work hard every day on behalf of the students in our classrooms and schools, you deserve no less from your Society. Have a great 2020 knowing that your Society will be there for you!



**The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society**

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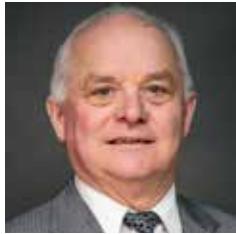
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INSIDE MTS

2020 WILL HOPEFULLY PROVIDE SOME CLEAR VISION

ROLAND STANKEVICIUS, GENERAL SECRETARY

Our 101st year lies before us.

With the arrival of 2020, The Manitoba Teachers' Society has stepped into its second century with the confidence that our vision matches the year. We'll need 20-20 vision. The future will soon be history.

There are fewer than 100 days before we hear from this government on its vision for public education, our classrooms and our profession. Significant changes are expected as the government receives the report and recommendations from the Manitoba K-12 Education Review Commission.

In this issue of *The Teacher* (p.14) we share with you the Society's top 10 key issues on which it based recommendations to the commission. The Society's genuine and dedicated efforts, over the past year, in sharing with the commission and supporting members in their presentations and reports, will hopefully be important ingredients and food for thought in developing a forward-looking, proactive public education plan for all Manitobans.

This has been an important focus of dialogue, preparation and collaboration for all education stakeholders and the highest hope is that the report and recommendations will reflect all of our best collective efforts in this very important work.

As we look forward and plan for change, it is also important to look back at the results of the government's vision over the past term. We do see the tracks and trails of some significant impacts on the work and lives of teachers. Our members' survey (page 8 of this issue) tells us a lot about how teachers are reacting to policy changes to date. The views from the frontlines are not encouraging. A majority of members report a worsening experience as teachers in the past three years. Almost 75 per cent of members polled said that the Pallister government is on the wrong track when it comes to public education policy. The abrupt cancellation of the K-3 Class Size (Cap) Initiative is overwhelmingly (80 per cent) decried as a main factor in why teachers feel less effective in dealing with student learning concerns and inappropriate student behavior.

Some additional, significant findings from the survey confirm that our membership is



solidly (more than 75 per cent) in favour of maintaining our collegial and collaborative membership model that includes principals and vice principals as part of the union. These findings further confirm that the current membership model of The Manitoba Teachers' Society must remain intact.

As we prepare to experience a future with change as a part of our reality we must gear up for what will come. Not only will the education agenda for learning and teaching change, we know as well our teacher welfare agenda will change as the government moves to centralized collective bargaining. The legislation on this momentous transformation has yet to be made public. The expectations are that this new paradigm for collective bargaining will be revealed later this year, the year of many changes. We have had very limited opportunities to share our perspectives and interests in what the legislation should encompass. Our fundamental position, as the teachers' union representing Members interests, included that:

1. All Members remain governed under the Labour Relations Act.
2. MTS will bargain directly with the Province of Manitoba.
3. Bargaining must be free, fair and with an 'open scope.'
4. The mechanisms for dispute resolution must be without limitation.
5. The best provisions from existing collective agreements should be the standard for the new contract.

6. The membership of MTS will remain as it currently exists.

It is insightful to read Kevin Rebeck's interview (MFL President - p.16) in this issue. He provides a refreshing perspective on the compatibility and connectedness of our mutual advocacy as union partners. It is a vision that sees our province with strong, vibrant and responsive public services that meet the needs of all citizens.

The future we face with a government that at this point is non-communicative and distant may require a further affirmation of our mutually beneficial partnerships and strengthening of those bonds. We are stronger and better as we invest more in building relationships with other labour organizations.

Our work starts now to share information and to engage our members and the public that change is coming. We have engaged and participated in every avenue of consultation and opportunity to inform on how change can result in better outcomes for students and our future. The 15,000 citizen submissions to the Review Commission are a clear indication that the public education agenda is vitally important to all Manitobans.

The next few months in Year 101 may just be the epitome of that mythical adage: "may we live in interesting times." Hopefully those times are purely stimulating and exciting and not the ironic kind that the curse often foreshadows.



JANE MALE arrived in Manitoba from the Philippines with two bachelor's degrees and a master's degree and had almost reached her limit in the seemingly endless quest to get a full-time teaching job.



FROM Quiznos

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

Jane Male recalls the day a few winters ago, trudging through the snow and frigid air on the way to her volunteer job at Governor Semple School in Winnipeg.

Pregnant and cold, she had almost reached her limit in the seemingly endless quest to get a full-time teaching job. Since arriving in Manitoba from the Philippines with two bachelor's degrees and a master's degree the summit seemed as distant as ever.

Her sobs merged with the squeak of her boots on the snow.

"Tears were streaming down my face and I just thought I want to go home, I want to go home. There was a lot of self-pity."

When she arrived at the school, the elementary students spotted her at the door.

"When I see the kids running up to me, saying Miss Jane, Miss Jane, I knew then I was in the right place."

Male's experience isn't unique. Internationally-trained teachers face a succession of Olympic-sized hurdles and hoops to clear and go through before they can even apply for teaching jobs in Manitoba. It often takes years.

James Nisbet Community School Principal Michelle Jean Paul, founder of the Educators

of Colour Network and whose father was an internationally-trained teacher, says the process is arduous.

Immigrant teachers must have their credentials evaluated and sometimes it is difficult to get documents from the countries of origin. The applicants often need more credentials and there is a fee to have them reviewed. After all that's done, most need further education, such as courses in Indigenous issues.

"For the most part, everyone needs to provide something more," says Jean Paul. "It's complicated. There are lots of variables."

And while applications work their way through the system, the international teachers and their families have to survive, often without easily-available transportation or extended family support.

Jane's husband, a teacher in the Philippines, for a time worked at a Winnipeg Burger King while his wife got her permanent certificate here.

Ripudaman Sidhu, born and educated in India, didn't work at Burger King while trying to get her teaching certificate. With her two master's degrees, she worked at a Quiznos. A single mother of two, she

would leave her volunteer work at a school each day and go to her job at the submarine sandwich shop.

Sidhu is now in her first year of full-time teaching, eight years after arriving in Canada.

Throughout she's worked at the sandwich shop, as an educational assistant, as a day care worker, as a substitute teacher and volunteer at a number of schools.

"I was running from one job to another job and the things I didn't know I read over and over to get familiar with education here and took many workshops and all those things went on and on and on and on. There was no rest in between."

There is no single comprehensive program in Manitoba to aid international teachers in getting certification to teach in the province.

Yet, the No. 1 career of immigrants to the province is secondary or elementary school teacher, according to Manitoba Start, which provides services for newcomers and potential employers.

Brahim Ould Baba, The Manitoba Teachers' Society staff officer responsible for working with internationally-trained teachers, says the issue is becoming more and more urgent.

**BRAHIM OULD
BABA MTS staff
officer is responsible
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TO Classroom

MTS is working on a number of initiatives – from web resources to workshops -- aimed at helping those teachers, who become MTS members when they get a provisional certificate and start subbing in a school.

"Our members still face challenges," says Ould Baba, citing one case where a member has worked 14 years as a substitute and on temporary terms, but can't land a full-time job. "For many it's tough to get a full-time job. It's a systemic thing. They work as EAs to get experience in the system."

"The main thing that they hear is that they are lacking is experience in the Canadian context with the Manitoba education system."

From student slang to social niceties to how to handle a job interview, there can be vast cultural differences.

Praveen Alahakoon, academic advisor for the Immigrant Teacher Education Program (ITEP) at the University of Winnipeg, says differences can arise simply over the understanding of a single word.

For example, an international teacher asked about inclusion would know the meaning of the word, but perhaps not as it relates to Manitoba classrooms, he says.

They have the academic experience, but need to add to that knowledge.

ITEP tries to provide international teachers with that knowledge. It is the program most often mentioned in discussions with educators involved in the issue.

It tries to arrange partnerships with school divisions to hire international teachers at a lower wage rate to work with full-time teachers to get classroom experience. However, the number of placements depends on the divisions and currently there are only seven in the program. Its most successful partnership has been with the Seven Oaks School Division. It has hired more than two dozen teachers from ITEP.

Superintendent Brian O'Leary says the program, a two-year placement in that division, better prepares the teachers for life in a Manitoba school.

"It's been hugely enriching to our school division and staff," he says. "The benefit goes beyond just the candidates that we hire and they bring their expertise into the schools and to teachers. Students need to see themselves reflected back in the classrooms."

That's one of the critical reasons many in the field are urging the hiring of

more international teachers. Manitoba classrooms are becoming more and more diverse, while the teaching staff is not keeping pace.

Ould Baba says in some schools in Manitoba the number of minority students can be well over 50 per cent with minority teaching staff as low as five per cent.

"Research shows that we should have teaching staff that represent the students."

Both Male and Sidhu praise the ITEP for helping them reach the end of their quests along with colleagues, some of whom became close mentors.

"All the four mentors they gave me, I have a very special place in my heart for them," says Sidhu.

Ould Baba says there is progress being made to add to that help with courses being developed, in conjunction with the universities, to specifically help internationally-trained teachers. Even offering courses at night or online is a major benefit for those who have to work during the day.

"They are small steps, but we are moving forward on many fronts," he says.

Members see little improvement

STORY BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

Three years in and six in 10 (62 per cent) teachers say their experience as educators has worsened under the Pallister government, while very few feel it has improved (3 per cent).

The annual province-wide membership survey, conducted by Viewpoints Research, on behalf of The Manitoba Teachers' Society polled 801 educators by phone in late October about their experiences and perceptions of public education in Manitoba.

The view that the government is on the wrong track on education has tripled in four years, up 49 points to 74 per cent. Overall job dissatisfaction is at its highest level ever (16 per cent) and satisfaction is at its lowest level (84 per cent). This poll also recorded the lowest level of very satisfied members (35 per cent).

Increased workload was identified as the main factor influencing job dissatisfaction. With the removal of the K-3 cap on class size, 75 per cent of kindergarten to grade three teachers said that their ability to perform their job as effectively as they would like has been affected.

More than eight in 10 (84 per cent), said that their ability to provide individualized attention has suffered, and that student behaviour has been negatively impacted (80 per cent) since the removal of the class size cap.

With growing concerns over reduced funding to public schools and program cuts (32 per cent), inadequate supports and resources (28 per cent) and class size (18 per cent), it is not surprising that MTS members came out in droves to vote in the recent provincial election. There was a 92 per cent voter turnout among members interviewed.

Kelvin Goertzen is entering his second term as education minister and 35 per cent of respondents said they were likely to consider him as a credible and reliable source of information on education issues. This is an increase of two points from last year's results; however based on 2017 polling results, he still lags behind his predecessor, Ian Wishart by 10 points (45 per cent).

A little more than nine in 10 (96 per cent) of respondents pointed to The Manitoba Teachers' Society as being the most reliable source of information on education.

Member confidence in The Society's ability to advocate for public education increased two points to 90 per cent. There has also been an increase in the percentage of respondents who feel they are much better off as MTS members (58 per cent), a gain of 6 points since 2018, the highest level ever for this question.

Overall, 84 per cent of members feel that they are better off with MTS representation (58 per cent much better off, 26 per cent somewhat better off) and 80 per cent

believe that MTS is doing a good job in representing them.

Seven in 10 (70 per cent) feel most supported by their principal, reinforcing the important role of school leaders in ensuring a collaborative work environment. When asked specifically about whether principals and vice-principals should be part of MTS, 76 per cent of respondents indicated that it was important for all educators to be represented by the same union.

While members receive a high level of support from school leaders, the majority of members consistently point to their colleagues as being their number one source of support (86 per cent), followed by the union (68 per cent) and school division (47 per cent).

Anecdotally, we know teachers spend their own money on their students, so we asked the question – in the past year how much of your own money did you spend on your students – to get a better idea about the prevalence.

According to our responders, in the past year, the majority of teachers spent between \$200 and \$500 of their own money on students (54 per cent), while 11 per cent spent more than \$1,000 on student supplies, teacher aids and snacks.

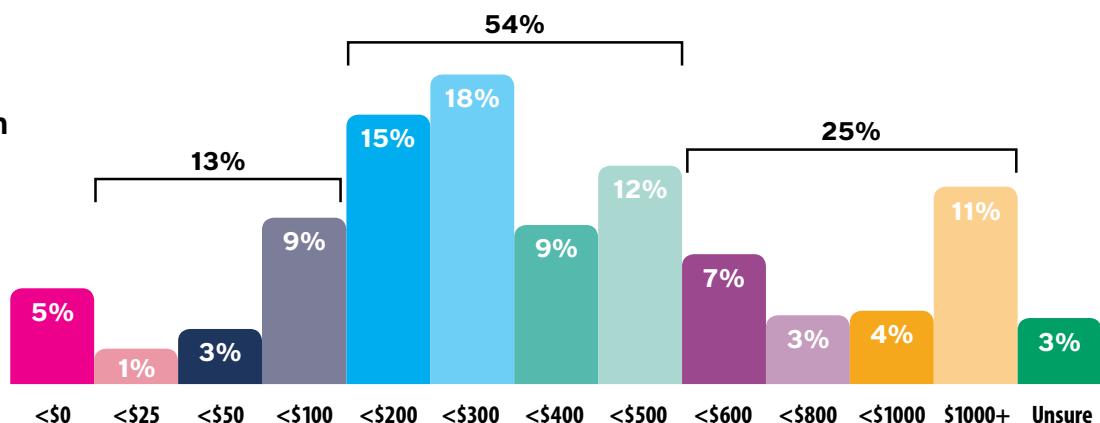
One in four (25 per cent) spent money on snacks and food.

The margin of error for this poll is ±3.3 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

BEING AN EDUCATOR

A majority of teachers spend between \$100 & \$500 of their own money on their students (54%), 10% spend less, 25% spend more.

1 in 10 spend \$1,000+.





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"Family" by Christina McKay (2017) of OMAZINIBII'IGEG Artist Collective (Children of the Earth High School)

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Dr. Niigaan Sinclair



Friday at Amber Trails School
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Saturday at Victoria Inn
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Sonya Ballantyne

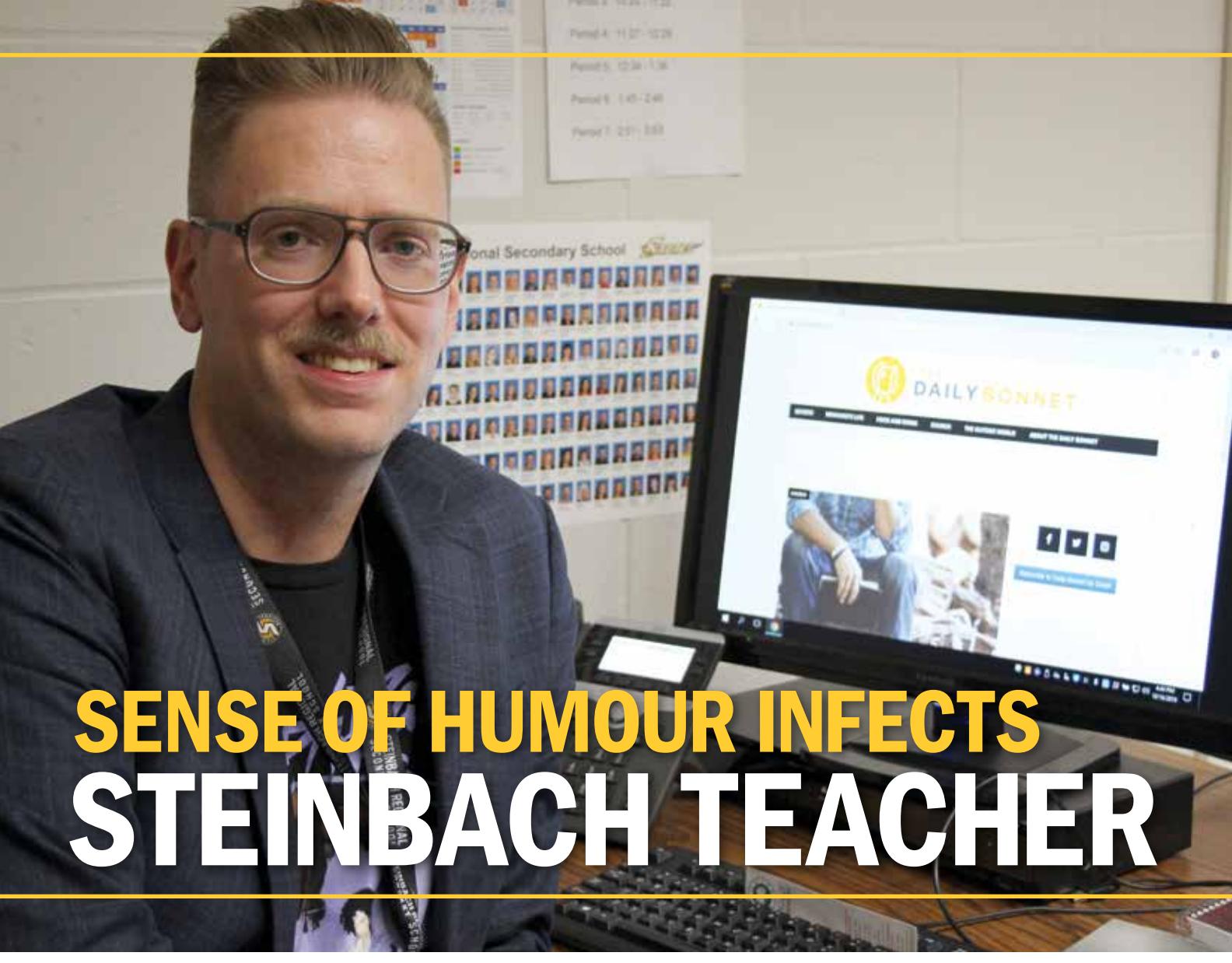
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SENSE OF HUMOUR INFECTS STEINBACH TEACHER

BY LINDSEY ENNS

When it comes to satire, it's safe to say that Andrew Unger knows a thing or two.

The Steinbach Regional Secondary School teacher is the creator behind The Daily Bonnet, a satirical news website featuring articles focused on his own Mennonite cultural and religious background.

"A Mennonite's never supposed to say they're proud of anything, but I'm proud to be a Mennonite and this website, I view it as a celebration of Mennonite things even though it's funny and it's poking fun," Unger said.

With headlines such as "Mennonite Woman Cleans House Just Before Cleaning Lady Arrives," "Mennonite Biker Gangs Clash with Hells Angels at Sturgis," and "McDonalds to Offer

All-Day Faspa," most Mennonites pick up on Unger's sense of humour.

"Very rarely do I get angry emails anymore, and very rarely does anyone not get it," he said. "My objective, beyond the humour, is that people discuss things or talk about things and satire can open up serious discussions and I hope that's done on occasion."

Unger has been teaching a satire unit to his Grade 12 English Language Arts students for more than 15 years. He said he hopes the unit helps students detect, understand, write and appreciate satire.

"You're kind of combining the creativity of writing fiction with the message of a persuasive essay," he said, adding the possibilities when it comes to this particular writing style are

endless. "It's interesting and it works pretty well because ... it sort of forces them to write something that has two different layers of meaning at the same time so it's a bit more challenging."

To help ease students into the world of satire, Unger introduces them to Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," a satirical essay written and published anonymously by Swift in 1729.

"I read that with my students and I don't tell them that it's satire," he said. "Eventually someone asks if this is real."

Satire can be a powerful communication tool and is becoming increasingly more common today, Unger says, however, it's not often understood very well. When it comes to teaching satire, Unger encourages



Below is just a sampling of what you'll find on The Daily Bonnet. All of these articles and more can be found online by visiting dailybonnet.com.

Police Vow to Put a Stop to Mennonite Crack Problem

Citizens of the Manitoba capital have been deeply distressed by the ever-increasing crack problem within the city's Mennonite population this summer. The problem came to a head this week after a huge quantity of crack was discovered in the stands of a North Kildonan baseball diamond.

"Enough is enough! We're not going to just bend over and take it!" said Constable Thiessen. "Let me tell you, we're going to get to the bottom of this!"

Experts are saying a suspender shortage this spring has led to a huge increase in Mennonite crack on city streets.

"It's not just the journeymen plumbers. Even the schejkbenjels are having an issue with crack!" said Thiessen. "Whether farmers, labourers, or bargain hunters at the MCC, Mennonites tend to do a lot of bending over and picking up of stuff...and this has got to stop! We want everyone to know: crack kills!"

Heated Political Discussion Leads to Brawl at Friesen Thanksgiving Gathering

Uncle Henry, 71, had his own nephew Peter, 20, in a headlock this Sunday after Mrs. Friesen didn't keep a tight enough rein on the political discussions around the dinner table.

"I should have nipped it in the bud as soon as Henry brought up Justin Trudeau," said Mrs. Friesen. "I thought it was harmless, but pretty soon Peter was screaming and my brother Bob socked Henry in the jaw. Even Doris got involved! There were broken plates, broken bones; it was absolute madness!"

Mennonite Couple Saves a Fortune by Sharing Dish at Local Restaurant

Local couple, Bill and Anne Kliewer, have accumulated enough money to last the rest of their lives after sharing a 3 piece meal at the local Chicken Chef.

"What's 10.95 divided by two?" wondered Bill. "Jauma, Annie, I don't tink we'll aver have money worries again!"

Since they both turned 60 this year, the Kliewers have noticed a significant decline in appetite.

"Years ago, when I was pregnant with our son Benny, I used to say I was eating for two," explained Anne. "Now, me and Bill, well the two of us are eating for one!"

Funk and Reimer Team Up on New Pop Album

'70s disco sensation Peter Funk and late '80s gangsta rap star Dick Reimer have joined forces to create a pop music tour de force. The new group called Dick Reimer and the P. Funk All-Stars is set to release a full-length LP later this fall.

"I just thought it was a natural fit," said Funk. "I've been funkng it up for decades, but figured we could use an update. You should hear Dick spit those rhymes!"

Dick Reimer recently consulted a Plautdietsch rhyming dictionary, which he says will really improve his rap game.

"You better hide your daughters and sons, because when this album drops, the darpa will never be the same," exclaimed Reimer.

teachers to try writing it themselves.

"Write it yourself and then have your students write it," he said. "You'll be able to detect it much more easily."

Unger says a reader's innate ability to decipher the difference between satire and fiction is similar to their ability to detect real or fake news.

"The prevalence of fake news has only solidified the need to teach this," he added. "If people can read well, they're not going to fall for fake news very easily."

Satire can also be a great writing exercise.

"I see it as a really good tool to look at both critical literacy and also it's an excellent creative writing exercise," he said. "It's challenging but it's also fun, there's humour in it."

Unger, who describes himself as a church-going Mennonite pastor's son from Steinbach, says The Daily Bonnet kind of started by accident a little over three years ago. It was a satirical article he posted on his blog about Steinbach city council planning to move the entire town to the Mennonite Heritage Village that caught the eyes of some readers.

"Usually 50, 60 people read things I wrote, not many, but then all of sudden with this article thousands of people had read it ... so I thought people like this I guess," he said. "I've been writing one article every day ever since then for over three years."

Roughly 1,200 articles later, Unger says the site has garnered roughly nine million views over the last three

years from readers around the world. Unger says he often walks around Steinbach with his wife, Erin Koop Unger, to come up with material for the site. Along with being an editor for The Daily Bonnet, Erin also runs Mennotoba.com, which features non-satirical information about Mennonites in Manitoba.

Mennonite culture and history has always been an interest of Unger's and The Daily Bonnet has allowed him to explore that even more.

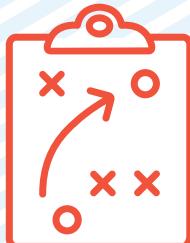
"As long as I can keep coming up with ideas and people are still reading it, then I'll keep doing it," Unger said. "The ideas are everywhere if you're looking for them."

We Are What We Learn

STORY BY ANNE BENNETT
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT KEHLER

MTS' annual polling tells us the public finds teachers are the most credible source of information about education. So it made sense to build 2019's My Classroom. Our Future. ad campaign around our own MTS members. Nine ads in total were created, with each teacher reflecting on the realities of their classroom. Produced by Tripwire Media, the ads ran from February to late December. A multi-platform communications approach included television, outdoor, print, web, movie theatre, and social media advertising for optimal visibility and recall.

With the My Classroom. Our Future. campaign well-established, MTS was ready to build support for public education by including additional voices beyond the membership.



PLANNING

MTS communications staff contracted with the PRHouse to create the concept. The intent: show that appropriately funded, equitable education delivers improved academic outcomes, healthier communities, more grads, less crime.

We Are What We Learn was born.



PARTICIPANTS

MTS communications and the PRHouse listed dozens of Manitobans whose authentic life experiences varied greatly. Diversity in culture, gender, and lived experience were key to their selection. Through a series of intensive pre-interviews, final candidates were chosen.

APPROVAL

After a round of revisions the ads were approved by communications and presented to MTS officers and provincial executive.

ROUGH CUT

A first version, called a "rough cut", was edited and provided to the MTS communications team for feedback.

PHOTOGRAPHY

We invited two participants at a time to share how their public school experience impacted the trajectory of their lives. We asked them to draw a life map. All the maps—just like all the lives—were different.

The one thing everyone had in common: public school.

EXECUTION

Space on television, radio, print and social media was purchased to provide optimal exposure to key audiences. The ads will be in market from mid-January until the end of March, 2020.

GOAL



Build support for public education as an investment – one that pays off in healthier communities, more grads, and less crime.

The review commission, what to watch for

BY
GEORGE
STEPHENSON

Next month the commission on K-12 education in Manitoba is scheduled to hand over its report and recommendations to the provincial government.

The education minister and premier will then make the report public with some indication as to what recommendations the government will implement, and when.

The commission has kept a tight lid on its deliberations, but there are key issues that have been the subject of their discussions and depending on which way they fall the impact will have seismic consequences for students, teachers and the general public.

AMALGAMATIONS

It is expected there will be recommendations on the amalgamation of school divisions. Speculation has run the gamut of a province with only five divisions to realigning divisions to mirror the regional health authorities, with shared responsibilities for some student services. The commission heard, in many submissions, arguments for and against reducing the number of divisions. The Manitoba Teachers' Society has not expressed a preference, but is adamant that no teacher's benefits are reduced because of amalgamation. At the start of the commission's work it was apparent that Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen was leaning toward amalgamations and looking for reasons why some divisions shouldn't be amalgamated.

STUDENT FOOD PROGRAMS

A number of organizations, including The Manitoba Teachers' Society, recommended the commission at least consider the need for a program to combat hunger among students. MTS recommended a universal meal program for students, similar to those in every other G7 nation. The Society, and other groups argued before the commission that poverty, reflected in the fact kids were coming to school hungry, was a major barrier to improved educational outcomes. Given the number of groups that mentioned nutrition programs, it is expected the commission will at least address the issue.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

At the beginning of the process, there were concerns that the commission would recommend establishment of a College of Teachers that would take over such functions as teacher discipline and certification. One reason for the concern was the commission's consultant, Dr. Avis Glaze, made a similar recommendation in Nova Scotia. However, she has always emphasized "Manitoba is not Nova Scotia" and, during public portions of the commission's work, almost no one spoke in favour of establishing another layer of bureaucracy, which would likely include more fees for teachers in education. MTS is strongly opposed to such a move.

NEW TEACHING STANDARDS

The Manitoba Teachers' Society recommended that the province, working with MTS, should develop uniform teaching and leadership standards for the profession. "The development of standards is crucial in helping to guide the expectations

for all educators. It pointed out to the commission the Alberta Teachers' Association has successfully undertaken such an initiative with the Alberta government.

CLASS SIZE AND COMPOSITION

The Manitoba Teachers' Society recommended the reinstatement of mandatory class limits in K-3. MTS members in the early years have reported that since the caps were lifted, they have less time with individual students and added stress.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO CLINICIANS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Teachers across the province have pointed out the need for improved access to such services as early assessments of learning disabilities. Sometimes assessments can take up to a year. As well, there is a need for greater help for students with mental health concerns and related health issues such as depression, eating disorders and substance abuse. MTS has recommended the government "make a firm commitment to reducing wait times, develop a comprehensive mental health curriculum and ensure students have access to clinician resources in a timely manner. Recently, the province announced \$4.4 million will be allotted to enhance access to school-based mental health and addictions supports. The program will involve regional health authorities.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

MTS has recommended the government review, with teacher involvement, and update any K-12 curriculum over seven years old.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Society has recommended the government and school divisions work together to review funding for professional development and involve MTS in facilitating appropriate professional learning opportunities for teachers. Also, it recommended that teachers are given more autonomy to choose PD opportunities applicable to their classroom needs.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

MTS wants to see the government and all stakeholders develop a strategy to recruit and retain French-language teachers and ensure students enrolled in French Immersion programs "are being given the supports they need to succeed and graduate with bilingual capabilities." The Society also called for French and Immersion curricula to be created in French, not simply translated.

RECONCILIATION

The Society has called on the government to ensure the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action are implemented to make age-appropriate curriculum on issues such as residential schools, treaties and Indigenous history; establish senior-level positions in government dedicated to Indigenous content and student achievement and provide teacher PD that promotes reconciliation.

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The Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certificate program offered by Extended Education at the University of Manitoba is the perfect practical addition to your degree and/or experience, says Tatiana Galetcaia, instructor, TESL.

"Teaching English is about more than speaking it. The program's practicum is very important, to build on your learning and experience," she says.

"We consider what it means to study and learn a language."

With over 25 years' experience teaching TESL programs, Galetcaia encourages her TESL students to consider the cultural differences that make a difference in how we communicate. For example, in China, students don't criticize the experts, so asking a Chinese student for a critique can be challenging.

You don't have to be a native speaker to teach ESL, Galetcaia says. In fact, she is originally from the Republic of Moldova in Eastern Europe, and she holds advanced degrees in applied linguistics, followed by

TESL training in Canada that honoured her knowledge and skills.

Non-native English speakers have the advantage of understanding the learner's perspective because they were once in the learner's shoes. But they must ensure their pronunciation is clear and error-free so they are easily understood.

Native English speakers tend to see themselves as a resource to copy, but they also need to understand where their learners are coming from, she says. "They must be ready to ask why we do this, why we say this. They must anticipate the questions of learners."

There are many reasons professionals take the TESL program. Some want to add an additional credential to their resume. Others want to teach abroad. TESL is a great opportunity to impress an employer or make a career change too, says Galetcaia. "You will open yourself up to the English language and new opportunities. If you are wondering what else you can do, to feel useful, help others, and advance in the labour market, this program could be the way. You will also discover so many things about your own knowledge and understanding of language. This could change your career."

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Labouring on with the MFL

STORY BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

The world is becoming an increasingly hostile place for labour unions as more and more governments impose legislation directly aimed at restricting the unions' right to function.

In Canada, the story is no different with several provincial governments, including Manitoba's, attacking some of the fundamental rights of unionism.

"Five years ago, we had a government where it was easy for any labour movement to meet with and while we might argue about how far or not far enough the government of the day was moving on issues, there were very little arguments about the direction," said Kevin Rebeck, president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour. "Since then, Brian Pallister happened and some of his first acts as premier has been to make things harder for unions."

Among other things, Rebeck is referring to the Public Services Sustainability Act (Bill 28) which mandates a two-year wage freeze for public sector workers on all new collective agreements. Nova Scotia and Ontario also have similar legislation.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour, through the Partnership to Defend Public Services, has led the charge of unions challenging the constitutionality of Bill 28 in court.

"We have a provincial government that has made it clear they do not like working people, unions and public sector workers," said Rebeck. "Look out if you are all three. MTS is all three of those things. The Partnership to Defend Public Services is an important role that we have taken on and are glad to have the teachers as part of this coalition."

Rebeck has been president of the MFL for 10 years and said that the organization has had some notable successes during his tenure.

"Our women's committee were the champions of bringing legislation forward for domestic violence leave provisions. We also got another first-of-its kind with the presumptive PTSD coverage. Some regions had coverage but only for emergency responders," he said. "The reality is anyone can be subjected to PTSD in a workplace, making presumptive coverage critical. I'm proud that we were able to achieve that on behalf of all working people."

As the coordinating body for provincial



"We have a provincial government that has made it clear they do not like working people, unions and public sector workers. Look out if you are all three. MTS is all three of those things. The Partnership to Defend Public Services is an important role that we have taken on and are glad to have the teachers as part of this coalition."

- Kevin Rebeck, president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour

unions, MFL's core areas of focus are labour legislation, health and safety and workers' compensation but Rebeck is quick to point out that the organization will expand its scope when necessary.

"We all live and breathe in this province and while we have our core areas we still make a point of speaking out on public policy issues that impact working people and their families," he said. "We care about our health care system. We care about our education system. We care about Indigenous issues and women's issues. We are huge advocates for doing a better job of covering mental health issues both under WCB and in the broader public as well."

MFL represents more than 110,000 workers across the province including many professionals such as professors, engineers and, more recently, nurses.

After more than 40 years, the Manitoba Nurses Union made the decision to join the MFL in part due to constitutional obligations, requiring the Manitoba Nurses Union to

be a member of their provincial federation of labour to maintain membership in their national organization.

There is no such requirement for members of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), of which MTS is a member. Currently, five CTF member organizations belong to their provincial federation of labour, while 11 do not.

With the acquisition of the 13,000 plus members of the Manitoba Nurses Union, MTS is now the last standing large provincial union without a membership in the MFL.

Rebeck said that the labour federation would welcome Manitoba public school teachers as members, but whether or not MTS makes that official, the federation will continue to work with the teachers' union to make things better for working people.

"If MTS doesn't join MFL, it won't change how our relationship is today. We have a good relationship. We respect MTS. We know they do incredible work. They have an incredible staff team. They have incredible activists," said Rebeck. "We'd love to have

them join our family and be part of that broader movement, but at the end of the day we have a strong relationship."

He explained that MTS, and all other non-members, have already reaped the benefits of MFL's advocacy and will continue to do so regardless of membership status.

"The reality is most of the services of the federation of labour you get whether you pay or not because we don't only advocate for MFL affiliates," he said. "We'd never say that we're going to make workplaces safer but only if you're part of MFL. It does not work that way. We speak out on issues that impact all working people, union and non-union."

When asked why the teachers should join the MFL, Rebeck pointed to some practical benefits.

"First, it's cheaper for everyone. We also have a bigger network and can do a better job," he said. "Whether it's demonstrations at the legislature or rallies in the streets to support picket lines, support for calls to action or any campaigns that any unions are putting on, we will be there. We help echo and amplify people's voices."

Membership in the federation also allows for a seat at the table, through the appointment of an executive member. The MFL has a tri-annual convention, which helps set the

organization's direction. All members are encouraged to submit resolutions on issues affecting their membership or workers in general. It is common for hundreds of resolutions to be debated at this event.

Rebeck said that one of the big concerns when the nurses were thinking of joining the organization was the issue of autonomy, and whether their membership in the federation meant that he was now speaking on behalf of nurses.

"I would never purport to speak for nurses just as I would never purport to speak for teachers. I am not a teacher. I admire teachers. They do an incredible job, but I couldn't run a classroom of kids every day," he said.

He added that people are unique in who they represent but that the work of the federation is work that has common ground and build off that strength.

"It is great to have that diversity of people representing different sectors and learning from each other. Sometimes what is done in one sector is done in a unique way that another sector can learn from," he said. "Part of our job is to bring people together to share those experiences. To share how they're taking challenges on, learn from one another, bring those best practices together and emphasize them."

He stressed that while labour unions most often align with the position of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, belonging to the MFL does not require any union to take a partisan stance on any issue, noting that the organization has a number of affiliates who are non-partisan such as the Manitoba Nurses Union and the Manitoba Government Employees Union.

"Yes, the MFL at its conventions have passed motions saying we will affiliate and have a relationship with the NDP. That does not translate and the law does not allow any money or resources to go to a political party so, none of your dues flows to any political party as a result of affiliating with the MFL," he said. "We certainly do mobilize and ask people who may want to volunteer their time to work on campaigns of people whose values reflect theirs."

The cost of membership is \$1.09 per member per month. It is important to note that there is a requirement to join the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) three years after joining MFL. The CLC membership is currently \$0.75 per member per month. This would cost MTS approximately \$380,000 per year for the combined membership. Dues increases are determined by each organization at their respective conventions.

BECA
by Rebecca Vause
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KEEPING AN EYE ON STUDENT BRAIN INJURIES

BY LINDSEY ENNS

When it comes to concussion awareness and recovery, teachers and students can never be too careful.

Dr. Glen Bergeron, a brain injury expert with more than 40 years of experience, says it's important for schools to have a protocol in place to deal with sport and non-sport related concussions. Teachers and students also need to understand the process of recovery and entry back into the classroom following this type of injury.

"In terms of the overall picture of life, return to learn and getting your cognitive ability back is more important than your ability to play football or hockey," the athletic therapist and University of Winnipeg professor said. "They should not return to play until they return to learn."

Bergeron says sport-related concussions are prevalent in both male and female athletes at the high school level.

According to a survey of 225 athletes from multiple sports in five high schools in one Manitoba school division, 35.3 per cent reported having sustained a sport-related concussion, while less than half (45.5 per cent) reported their concussion. A total of 38.4 per cent of athletes purposely chose not to report a concussion during a game or 33.8 per cent during a practice. Of the 225 respondents, 40.2 per cent reported having sustained at least one concussion from all activities including sport.

The study, which was administered by Bergeron between December 2015 and

May 2016 for the Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences, also showed that the two major barriers to reporting a sport-related concussion were feeling embarrassed and finding it difficult to report.

Bergeron says prevention, education and proper equipment are key when it comes to fielding the number of concussions in sport and on school grounds.

"Identification and management of a concussion largely depends on the honesty of the athlete or the student. They need to tell us what they feel, we need to believe them and they need to feel comfortable coming and telling us that they have a concussion," he said. "Athletes, they'll try to hide a concussion because they want to play ... so what will happen is their grades in school deteriorate and the teachers don't know about it."

Research also indicates that the majority of concussions at school happen on the playground, not necessarily during sports, so they can often go unwitnessed and untreated, Bergeron said.

A concussion is a brain injury that can't be seen on routine X-rays, CT scans or MRIs. It affects the way a person may think and remember things, and can cause a variety of symptoms including physical, cognitive, emotional and sleep-related. Any blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that causes the brain to move inside the skull and become injured, can lead to a concussion.

A concussion itself is what Bergeron refers to as a functional injury, a disruption in the capacity of the brain to function. The brain is not damaged but it's out of balance and it could take seven to 10 days or up to four to six weeks to fix that imbalance, he added. That need for the brain to regain balance also requires energy.

"One of the No. 1 energy expensive activities that people with concussion go through is anxiety and stress," he said. "If the school environment is not recognizing and accommodating to the student in terms of facilitating and being patient with their recovery and understanding of the recovery then that student is anxious and stressed ... which just really perpetuates the problem."

Dr. Michael Ellis, medical director of the Pan Am Concussion Program, says teachers play a vital role when it comes to youth concussion recognition and return to school and sport management. He says currently many schools and Manitoba school divisions, including Winnipeg School Division, now have standardized school-based concussion protocols and its important teachers are aware of them.



If the school environment is not recognizing and accommodating to the student in terms of facilitating and being patient with their recovery and understanding of the recovery then that student is anxious and stressed ... which just really perpetuates the problem."

- Dr. Glen Bergeron, brain injury expert

"It is important for teachers to understand that with early recognition and referral to a physician for proper medical diagnosis and management, the vast majority of children and adolescents who sustain a concussion will make a complete recovery and a successful return to school and sport activities," Ellis said in an emailed statement to The Manitoba Teacher.

Among the patients evaluated by the Pan Am Concussion Program, approximately 70 to 80 per cent of concussions occur during sports, while the remainder are sustained during non-sport related activities such as motor vehicle accidents or falls, Ellis said.

Teachers should also be aware of the signs and symptoms of concussion and what to do if a student has sustained one or a more serious brain or spine injury, Ellis added. Signs of a concussion can range from headache, dizziness and blurred vision to not thinking clearly, problems concentrating and feeling slowed down.

Ellis encourages teachers to annually review the Pre-season Concussion Education Sheet included in the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport, which can be found online by visiting Parachute Canada's website parachute.ca.

"Every school in Manitoba should have a standardized concussion protocol in place that is consistent with the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport and other school and sport-based concussion protocols so all school and sport stakeholders are on the same page about how to optimize concussion education, prevention and management across our province," Ellis said.

In 2017, Bill 37, The Concussion in Youth Sport Act, was introduced in the Manitoba legislature, according to Parachute Canada. The bill proposed requirements for removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols in sport organizations and schools as well as improved concussion awareness education, particularly for coaches. The bill did not proceed to second reading.

The Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association along with Sport Manitoba have developed their own protocol to help guide young athletes who may have a suspected concussion. The protocol, which can be viewed online by visiting mhsaa.ca, covers the recognition, medical diagnosis and management of athletes who may sustain a suspected concussion during a sports activity. It was last updated in April, 2019.

The Lord Selkirk School Division also pushed for a province-wide protocol to help Manitoba schools deal with concussions during the Manitoba School Boards Association annual convention in March of 2017. In 2014, the MSBA adopted a sport related concussions policy in conjunction with Sport Manitoba and The Manitoba Physical Education Teachers' Association. The protocol has since been distributed to all Manitoba schools.

Bergeron says it is important for a person to fully recover from one concussion and then minimize the chances of a second one. Prevention helps limit the chance of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), which is a neurodegenerative disease caused by repeated head injuries. CTE symptoms can include problems associated with behaviour, mood and thinking.

So much time is spent learning about how we can diagnose and treat concussions but more time needs to be spent on how to prevent them in the first place, Bergeron added.

"Largely concussions, particularly in sport, a lot of them are preventable because it's all about respect for each other," he said. "Hits to the head and retaliation hits and things like that in sport are not appropriate and we need to be able to start teaching athletes how to respect each other and how to respect the sport."

PORT FOL

HEY, KIDS,
GET OFF
MY LAWN!



Yes, it's always **someone else's fault**

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

BORN AND RAISED IN ALBERTA, COVERED ALBERTA POLITICS AS A YOUNG REPORTER. HIS FAMILY DOES STILL TALK TO HIM.



Alberta Premier Jason Kenney unfurled his best Statler and Waldorf routine explaining why he didn't attend September's day of global action on climate change, which involved tens of thousands of Canadian students.

"There were communist hammer-and-sickle flags out there – I wouldn't go to a rally with a hammer and sickle flag any more than I would to go to one with a swastika, quite frankly," he told CBC. "The manifesto for that day of action was essentially to shut down the entire industrial economy, virtually overnight."

Right, that was the point. Crazy kids with their wild ideas, voodoo music and promotion of archaic farming implements!

Oh, those wacky, wascally Wexiters! Like Elmer Fudd, who appears to be their muse, they're constantly flailing and failing against the federal (when it's Liberal) wabbit.

They've again managed to elect all but one Conservative in every riding in Alberta and Saskatchewan without persuading the rest of the country to follow their perpetual choice. So, it's back to plan B: Western separation. Wexit, in the unimaginative vernacular of the day.

Writing in that package of Trumpian type, The National Post, Larry Soloman warns that we should take these age-old threats seriously. Meanwhile Alberta Premier Jason Kenney ("a growing discord of national unity in Alberta") and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe ("discussion around separation is alive ... here in the province") are using the idea to set their own political trajectories.

But Larry, Moe and Kenney aren't what one would call the voices of reason.

Showing more cranial function than those three put together our own premier, Brian Pallister, said "I have no time for that." Maybe he also has a better sense of history.

Albertans have been whining off and on (depending on which party is in power nationally) for almost 50 years about their sorry lot in life, never pondering what their own governments have contributed to their

UNION BOSSES NO MORE

Ontario Premier Doug Ford appears to have wearied of referring to union officials as union bosses. They are now "thugs."

Said he on a radio news program: "This isn't about class sizes, gentlemen," he said pointing to student protests. "This is strictly from the union thugs, as I call them, the teachers' union. There's finally a government with a backbone that wants our kids to start learning math."

Speaking of math, his government might want to pull up a desk. Government bosses have been claiming Ontario spends more on education than any government in its history. However PressProgress.ca points out the administration's own figures show per-pupil spending dropped from the past year.

You have to wonder why U.S. President Donald Trump continues to brag about himself as a "stable genius."

Is it really a big deal to be smarter than all the other horses and donkeys in the stable?

so-called demise. Everything is always somebody else's fault, most often federal Liberals.

Those fires were liberally inflamed by that colossus of Alberta, Peter Lougheed, when he ended 35 years of Social Credit government in 1971. He fostered the idea that the rest of Canadians were trying to steal the province's oil money. In his '71 and '75 campaigns he almost made it sound as if Albertans fed and nurtured the dinosaurs they later plunked in the ground to create fossil fuels.

In his first term, Lougheed's government was rolling in dough. His major '75 campaign promise was to pay off the debts of every municipality in the province.

At least Lougheed recognized that oil was a finite resource, the value of which was about as fixed as an elevator, so he began a major push to diversify the Alberta economy so it wouldn't end up where it is today.

He, and the Tory premiers who followed invested in or bought an airline, a pulp mill, a sewage plant, a telecommunications company, a hog plant and on and on. And how'd that work out? According to a University of Calgary study, "by the early 1990s, the government had lost an estimated \$2.3 billion (not adjusted for inflation) on various unsuccessful initiatives."

And today?

The latest Alberta budget calls for cutting more than 2,000 employees, wage cuts (including those of teachers) and a final deficit of \$8.7 billion. Of course, this is all the fault of Rachel Notley, the former NDP Premier. It couldn't be the fault of successive Tory governments that were in power longer than Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.

Nope, none of those governments had a single misstep. Well, maybe the hog plant (\$209 million lost) wasn't a great idea. And maybe the pulp investment (\$200 million plus lost) or the sewage plant (\$440 million down the drain) or the telecommunications company (up to \$600 million gone) might have been handled better. But, really, it's Rachel Notley's fault. Or Trudeau I and then Trudeau II. Jean Chretien had a hand in it, as well.

So now we're supposed to take these Wexiters seriously because they've been doing things the same way for 50 years, expecting a different result. Ah, well, their new, little landlocked country will probably do just fine, hiring its own police force, negotiating its own trade deals and pushing a pipeline across another country to the coast.

That will probably work out as well as the magnesium smelter (\$164 million lost).

On this, perhaps we should just follow Premier Brian Pallister: "I have no time for that."



COPYING DURING EXAMS

A Bangladeshi politician has been expelled from university after allegedly hiring as many as eight lookalikes to take her place in exams.

Tamanna Nusrat is accused of paying the lookalikes to pretend to be her in at least 13 tests. Elected to parliament last year, was studying to get a bachelor of arts degree.

"We expelled her because she has committed a crime. A crime is a crime," said a university spokesperson.

A college official said: "The proxy students were protected by the MP's musclemen when they sat for the tests. Everybody knew it but nobody uttered a word because she is from a very influential family."

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?
I'D LOVE TO HELP.
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REFRESH

BY RAMAN JOB, PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR

FRESH READS FOR THE NEW YEAR



Kirsten Thompson

Dare to Lead by Brené Brown. This book is not only inspiring but really helped me step back as an educator and reflect on all the tasks we ask our students to participate in through the year. Are we modelling this vulnerability and growth mindset ourselves? Brené has also recently launched an educators' platform called Daring Classrooms that has lots of great resources!



Andrew Mead

I recommend **Hacking School Discipline** by Maynard and Weinstein because how we work with kids and treat them drives the culture of the school. This book talks about nine ways to create a culture of empathy and responsibility using restorative justice. Every time we get to communicate with kids and families is a chance to teach, even in the uncomfortable situations. Often, those situations give us the opportunity to teach the most important things.



Jonathan Waite

In a world with Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and other social media platforms, how are teachers helping their students be digital leaders and not simply digital citizens? In **Social LEADia** by the incomparable Jennifer Casa-Todd, teachers across all grade levels can learn about the why, what, and how in regards to developing the digital leaders of today and tomorrow.



Leah Obach

I'd highly recommend **Becoming** by Michelle Obama. This book is inspirational and interesting! Obama shares stories that highlight the important role education played in her life. She also inspires readers to strive for ongoing growth.



Maria Nickel

The Ordinary Spaceman by astronaut Clay Anderson. It is a story about courage, obstacles, teamwork and how to deal with life's curve balls. He was rejected by NASA 14 times but he never gave up until he finally got accepted. Very honest story, very human story, funny and sad. Loved it. I often read parts of it to my class when we talk about hard tasks or rejection.



Zoe Bettess

Anything from Jennifer Serravallo is a good read and resource for teaching and assessing student's reading and writing. I love **The Reading Strategies Book** for finding ideas to help teach reading skills.



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