



President's Message: Spring is Here?

At 5:29AM yesterday, Spring arrived; it is the vernal equinox. Astronomically, this is the time we note the fact that daylight hours are now longer than the nighttime – we have turned the corner, and are emerging from the dark of winter. At the opposite end of the earth's orbit is the autumnal equinox which marks the change from summer to fall. In 1999, September 22 was the last full day of summer, but, on that day, public sector workers might have had the feeling they were emerging from a dark period, not entering one. This is because the PC government of Gary Filmon had been defeated the previous day. Whatever your politics, the years of the Filmon government were not kind to these workers. Unpaid days off, legislation restricting bargain rights, and a reduced budgets were hallmarks of those years. Fast forward to 2017 and we have already seen the Pallister government cut funding to many school divisions (including ours), and scrap the 20K3 guidelines. Today the Pallister government introduced the Public Services Sustainability Act – legislation that limits the collective bargaining rights of most public sector unions, including teachers, by limiting these unions' ability to negotiate wage increases. I will leave the official response to Society leadership, but you will forgive some union members for thinking that the first full day of Spring 2017 is a little dark.

Excerpt from the Government's News Release (yes, this applies to teachers)

[The] proposed new ... public services sustainability act would:

- respect existing collective bargaining agreements and support meaningful collective bargaining;
- establish a rolling four-year sustainability period, beginning at the expiration of existing collective agreements, which establishes a framework for future increases to public sector compensation levels and fee payments for physicians that would set out limits on increases as follows:
 - in the first two years of the sustainability period, unionized and non-unionized public sector employees receive no pay increase;
 - in the third year, a maximum increase of 0.75 percent; and
 - in the fourth year, a maximum increase of 1.0 percent.
- encourage employers and unions to jointly find ongoing cost savings which can be returned to Manitoba citizens; and
- adopt a balanced and measured approach, by:
 - retaining increases resulting from promotions and periodic or performance-based increases within an established pay range;
 - not affecting pensions; and
 - not imposing wage rollbacks or unpaid days off.

ISD Budget Update

In its approved 2017/2018 budget, the Board of Trustees has cut another 2.0FTE positions in addition to those announced two weeks ago. Both instructional coach Lead Teacher positions will end with this school year, leaving a lone 0.5 FTE Technology Lead Teacher (a new position) as the only teacher in this category. Overall, the division will operate with 2.87 FTE fewer teachers next year than in 2016/2017. At the board meeting in which the budget was passed, board chair, Alan Campbell, said these and other changes were not the result of any of the feedback received at the February 23 public budget presentation. In the end the budget passed with several dissenting voices. Those in favour of the budget stated they were reluctantly in favour, and cited the fact that additional money had been allocated to PD despite the loss of almost all lead teachers. Those against the budget stated that the tax increase was still too high and that more cuts needed to be found. I can't say that I have been keeping score, but I believe this is the first budget vote that I have witnessed where both the ISD Board Chair and the ISD Finance and Audit Chair have voted against the budget. There is no doubt that the trustees of the Interlake School Division have worked long and hard at this budget. By their own admission, there remains a philosophical divide between board members which likely led to many long debates. Budget 2017 can be viewed on the [ISD website](#).

ITA AGM: April 25

The Annual General Meeting of the Interlake Teachers Association is just over one month away. This event has been well attended in recent years and I thank you all for your support. As I have said in the past, this is the one day of the year that your Association needs you. You know by now that we need 40 members to make quorum, so we can elect an executive and pass a budget, but we aim much higher than that. This is an event to learn about the issues and socialize with your colleagues. Each year we endeavour to make this more than a voting meeting by bringing in guests to speak on issues of the day. Well, right now, there is no issue more topical than what our government has done and what it might do in the future. For this reason, MTS president, Norm Gould will join us to speak at length on this topic. He was at the table when the government called unions to discuss the deficit and he can give us a first hand account of how that went. This is real, and this is important. It is the opinion of many that the cuts we have seen so far are just the beginning. Please plan to join us on April 25, 4:30 PM, in the Stonewall Collegiate Music Room to meet with your Association members and to hear from your Society president. In these increasingly difficult times, this is one thing you can do for your union; you can also find out what your union is doing about these difficult times.

