

President's Message: Moving Forward

As we enter the month of June, we look forward to the relative calm of summer. Will it be the calm before a storm, likely not. A few days ago, Manitoba public sector unions announced Thursday they will file a court challenge against Bill 28: the wage freeze law. "We're very disappointed the government's not willing to negotiate at a bargaining table. They're choosing the heavy-handed approach of legislation to get their way," said Kevin Rebeck, president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour.* Legal challenges can take years to wind through the courts; no storm there, just a slow simmer. The 2017/2018 school year will see teachers across the province realize two wage increases: 1.5% in September and another 1.5% on January 1. Those are the final two wage increases included in the current collective agreement which will expire on June 30, 2018. After that, we are told by the government that we must forego wage increases to help right the financial ship. It is sometimes argued that any increase in teacher wages takes money out of the classroom, but where, exactly, do people making these arguments think teachers work? Teachers are fairly-compensated, well-educated, professionals who do a difficult job that is critical to the functioning of society. Teachers play a positive role in our society and most members of that society recognize that. Teachers continue to be the number one trusted source of information about education. Despite the hyperbole and bombast emanating from the legislature, the Manitoba Teachers' Society will continue to work with calmness, purpose, and determination for the welfare of teachers. We can all help out this summer by emphasizing and highlighting all that is positive about our life work. We cannot move on from Bill 28, but we can move forward.

* [CBC news](#)

Teacher Tweets

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has launched a social media campaign allowing Manitobans to relate positive stories of teachers.

Citizens of Manitoba are encouraged to use the hashtag **#myteachermystory** to relate memories of their days in public school and the public-school teachers that made that time rewarding. Everyone has a favourite teacher; let's hear about yours.

#myteachermystory

Too Much Us in We Day? (adapted from mbteach.org)

Teachers at the recent MTS AGM voted to remove MTS support for We Day. “The Manitoba Teachers’ Society model of social justice is not reflected in We Day,” the resolution said. We Day doesn’t promote, support, or include a model of social justice that the Society identifies as effective in advancing social change. In recent years, We Day has attracted controversy because of the number of corporate sponsors involved in the events and the practices of those sponsors, both at the event and in their business dealings. Some sponsors have been accused of actions in other countries that run counter to the messages on which We Day is based. This decision does not extend to the involvement of teachers, students, and schools. Teachers and schools are free to make their own decisions regarding participation in We Day. In the past, MTS staff and elected officials have promoted and participated in We Day; this will now end.

Bargaining Survey a Success

Thank you to all the ITA members who participated in the recent bargaining survey. We received a solid response about important issues. Unfortunately, but necessarily, for reasons of bargaining confidentiality, the results of the survey cannot be shared with the general membership. The survey marks the beginning of a process. Through school visits and meetings with members, we will continue to seek input as we define bargaining priorities. The ITA Executive will analyze the results at a day-long meeting in October. At some point during the year, Maria Nickel, our Collective Bargaining Chair, will call for volunteers to serve on the Collective Bargaining Steering Committee. This committee will take all the information gathered and create the opening package.

MTS Fees

The delegates at the annual MTS AGM approved a modest 1.5% fee increase. The MTS membership fee will be \$988.00 for 2017/2018. In April, the ITA membership approved a local fee of \$120 for the year. The premium rate structure for our pension and the disability plans remains unchanged. Premiums for these plans are calculated as a percentage of income, so with wages rising next year, the premiums will increase proportionally.

