

President's Message: Freedom & Privilege

November is a month for remembrance and reflection. We remember; to both honour the fallen, and respect the freedoms for which they fought. We reflect; to grasp that having freedom is a privilege, and with privilege comes duty. The duty to defend our freedoms and those without them; to use these freedoms wisely; and to pass this knowledge on to the next generation. Just a few more of the countless teaching moments teachers provide for their students, that won't be reflected by scores on a report card. How do we model responsible use of freedom, reflection, and foster resiliency for our students? How do we build the skills they need to do it on their own and fight for privilege?

November is also Child Safety Protection Month, aptly another theme in the line of duty for teachers. So many of you are embedded in the school life and the communities where you teach. You do it to improve your own well-being, as well as to improve the lives of your students and their families. Teachers fight for their kids in a way that is only paralleled by parenthood. We supply food and necessities because we know hungry brains aren't thinking about numeracy or literacy. Teachers will spend 4 hours prepping for a 6.5-hour day, so that both students and sub can have success. You provide safe spaces for ideas, culture and social groups, and foster opportunities to ask questions and make mistakes; all in the on-going search to know; "your kids" will be "okay" in the real world. Will they be prepared to handle what comes with their freedom to make choices?

Our communities and students look to us as the example for living, working and interacting with each other in a world full of freedoms and challenges. We know this. Society has put teachers in charge of their most precious resource, and therefore holds them in the brightest light and at the highest standard. Members often point out this is unfair. But it is however, an opportunity. As educator's, we set standards for ourselves and our students in the classroom, so why not for citizenship as well? The way we manage ourselves and reach out to others, our interactions with colleagues and community, and the way we face challenges are all examples that imprint upon the skill sets of our students. Freedoms and privilege used conscientiously can be impactful examples of how to thrive in an ever-evolving world. Misuse of privilege or negative moments often stick longer, but can be valuable learning opportunities. Be mindful we are in an amazing position of influence. Like any superpower, we can use it for good or other.

Of News and Note:

Teachers and other public sector unions are walking and talking about freedoms across the country. Whether law makers or public citizens are listening, remains to be seen. Nationally, Ontario's secondary teachers are poised to walk off the job if contract negotiations with the government continue to stall. 95.5% of our colleagues of the OSSTF voted in favour of strike action this week.

Locally, the human rights challenge by the province's public sector workers, to wage-freeze Bill 28 began this week. Recently introduced, Bill 2 (amendment act to Bill 28), specifically attacks the independence of arbitrators and arbitration boards, and therefore undermines the interest arbitration process, which is Manitoba teachers' only mechanism for resolving bargaining disputes.

BILL 28*The Public Services Sustainability Act*

Effect on collective bargaining:

1. Freezes salaries for public sector workers in the first two years of their next collective agreement, followed by a 0.75 per cent increase in the third year and a 1 per cent increase in the fourth.
2. Restricts the ability to bargain increases to other monetary benefits such as premiums, bonuses or allowances.
3. By 2022, this amounts to about \$222 million in foregone salary increases for Manitoba teachers.

 Status: Passed but not proclaimed.
BILL 2*The Public Services Sustainability Amendment Act*

Effect on collective bargaining:

1. Gives cabinet discretion to exempt a collective agreement or portions of an agreement from the law.
2. Allows the government to shorten the restraint period where a bargaining unit has already seen wage freezes and very low pay increases.
3. This bill undermines the role of arbitrators and gives ministers the authority to determine wages. The right to arbitration is a fundamental element of Manitoba teachers' right to collectively bargain.

 Status: Introduced in the last session.

Bill 28 undercuts the fundamental right of teachers to a free and fair collective bargaining system, as well as for all other workers who use arbitration in lieu of the right to strike.

Kevin Rebeck, president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, is one of the spokespeople for the nearly 30 unions represented in the case, including the Manitoba Teachers' Society. He stated to CBC news, that the unions' fight against the bill isn't about guaranteeing wage increases — it's about protecting the collective bargaining process. *"This court case is not about the outcome. This isn't about the zeros," he said. "This is about government not allowing people to meet at a table to problem solve together to find solutions that will work."* [LINK](#) to article.

In other Collective Bargaining news, the arbitration hearing for the Louis Riel Teachers' Association also began this week. MTS staff and legal representation are closely involved in both legal matters. Reminder to stay informed, as the K-12 Commission recommendations are expected in March 2020, and both the human rights challenge and the LRTA arbitration are expected to be near completion by February/March 2020 as well.

Throne Speech: The throne speech was delivered by Premier Pallister this week. Here is a [LINK](#) to the summary, as well as the [ENTIRE SPEECH](#) if you wish. One educational item of note: *"launching the \$25-million Teachers' Idea Fund to support innovative solutions brought forward to streamline operations by teachers, and improve educational outcomes across the province, with successful applicants announced in 2020."*

Some ways to keep your healthy super-hero glow:

- **LifeSpeak:** At The Manitoba Teachers' Society, they realize there are times we could all use extra advice, support, information or inspiration. LifeSpeak – a digital wellness platform that can provide MTS members and their families with instant access to expert advice and confidential information when and where they need it. Expert-led video modules on topics such as:
 - Mindfulness
 - Eating & Sleeping for Optimal Health
 - Stress Mastery
 - Mental Health Stigma
 - Digital Addiction Parenting Topics – from Maternity to Teens
 - Parenting Topics – from Maternity to Teens
 - Professional Development & Leadership content

- **You have a right to work in a safe & violence-free environment:**
 - November is also a month where the ISD Workplace Safety & Health committee will begin their important work for all ISD employees. Committee members have begun fall inspections and will meet November 28th to discuss results, next steps for improvement and work with ISD to meet the safety concerns and needs of all employees. The committee is comprised of both employer and employee representatives from all ISD employee groups, and their job is to inspect and report any unsafe conditions in ISD workplaces. The inspectors will report and recommend potential solutions to your principal, so that ISD can correct the issues. If there is anything you are concerned about, please make it known to your inspectors, discuss with your principal, or email our safety consultant, Robyn Lowe at rlowe@isd21.mb.ca.
 - **Please report all incidents of violence or harassment**, using the ISD forms. **You can find these forms on your WSH board in your building.** (Quiz night practice: Do you know where your WSH board is? Or the numbers of each form?)
 - **What constitutes violence?** “Violence is the attempted or actual exercise of physical force against a person and any threatening statement or behavior that gives anyone reason to believe that physical force will be used against them.” *ISD Policy B-6 (R2)*
 - B-6 (R2-F1) is the Workplace Violent Incident Report Form
 - **What constitutes harassment?** “Harassment is defined by the Workplace Safety and Health Act as: i) Objectionable conduct that creates a risk to the health of a worker; or ii) Severe conduct that adversely affects a worker’s psychological well-being. Harassment is not about the person’s intent. It is about how the behavior affected the victim.” *ISD Policy B-6 (R1)*
 - B-6 (R1-F1) is the Workplace Harassment: Statement of Complaint Form

- **Social Media:** “Employees should treat all social media space and communication like a classroom and/or professional workplace. The same standards expected in Interlake School Division professional settings are expected on all social media sites. If a particular type of behavior is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behavior is also inappropriate on all media sites. Employees should exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using social media site.” *ISD Policy B-10 (R1) Section e).*

Upcoming Events/Dates:

- **Women in Educational Leadership Forum:** For every woman teacher who wants to lead, read and learn with colleagues online, the *Women in Educational Leadership Forum* Group is for you. We're currently talking about **Brené Brown's *Dare to Lead***, but even if you haven't read the book, there's plenty you can contribute to the discussion.

Search for us on Facebook, answer a couple of simple questions and jump in! We have an engaging live broadcast every Wednesday night.

- **Seminar on Leadership: An Equity Perspective:** will look at how ethnicity, class, and gender impact our perceptions, understandings and responses to and of leadership. It will examine how our values and beliefs shape how we build relationships, make decisions and define what good leadership looks like. **Saturday, November 23, 2019**, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM at Merchants Corner, 541 Selkirk Avenue. This workshop will be highly interactive.
- **Educating for Action; Our Learning Journey: MTS/MASS Conference** focuses on learning as a journey for both educators and students. Keynote speakers and breakout sessions will focus on the why, who and how of education, the needs and contexts of our diverse learners, enhancing teaching practices, and supporting teacher inquiry and collaboration. Conference attendees will be challenged to reconsider what it means to be a learner within the complex contexts of education. Dates: February 27-28, 2020. Registration is now open at www.mbteach.org.
- **Annual ITA Quiz Night:** Thursday, January 30, 2020. Parochial Hall, 310 1st ST. W, Stonewall. Doors open at 6:30, quizzes to start at 7pm. Open to all ISD employees and significant others. Sign-up as a team or we are always looking for individuals to fill teams as well. \$10/player. Some refreshments for sale, and bring your own snacks, team name, laughter and fun. Don't forget the fun! Reply to Cathy at cpleskach@isd21.mb.ca with your school team name and numbers.

Quiz night study topics: How well do you know your school division? Our great-and-powerful quiz leader, Brooke, always has some local trivia fun up her sleeve. And we can't wait to see what abstract music clips John has in store this year. Topics could include school names, logos, sports teams, world cities, mascots, and yes of course Policy Manual reference numbers!!! We had 8 teams last year, lets make it 10 and FILL THAT HALL! See you there.

- **Neat site you might want to use for themes with students:** www.holidayinsights.com has a theme for each day of each month. November is also aviation history and peanut butter lovers' month. **November 21st is World Hello Day.** It was designed to promote world peace, and is really easy to participate.

Simply, greet 10 people with a, "Hello!"

