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The WTA NEWS

What you have not read in *The Manitoba Teacher!*

by: Dave Najduch, President

If you had followed *The Manitoba Teacher* over the past few years, you would have read about all the good work done by The Manitoba Teachers' Society on behalf of the membership. There is much that can, and should be celebrated. What you would not have read about is also as important and is unfortunately not being discussed or share with the membership through *The Manitoba Teacher*.

The first issue of importance is the ongoing conflict between the unionized staff at McMaster House and the political arm of the Society. The labour unrest occurred under the former President, Brian Ardern and the current President, Pat Isaak. This may be old news to some, but at a Presidents' Council meeting held a few years ago, the unionized staff of the Society held their first ever picket outside of the MTS building to inform all Presidents from across the province about their concerns regarding the staff pension plan. An ad was taken out in a local paper outlining staff concerns and handbills were put under the doors of all the delegates at the MTS Annual General Meeting in May of that year.

My sense is that the morale among many of those who work for the Society on our behalf is still very low. At the 2008 MTS Annual General Meeting, the recipient of the Society's Life and Honorary Membership, Judy Balabas delivered an acceptance speech that touched on many issues. Judy's reflections included concern for the MTS staff, the direction of the Society and the lack of commitment to appropriate representation on behalf of the membership. For those of you who are not aware, Judy Balabas was a Provincial Executive member, MTS President and Staff Officer of the Society.

Last year's Annual General Meeting of the teacher's Society was a low point for a number of other reasons. It is evident that a meeting will be difficult when it takes 45 minutes to approve the agenda. Many WTA delegates who attended the AGM for the first time were surprised at the level of anger and hostility both on the floor of the meeting and during informal discussions in the evenings. The big issue of debate was linked to the governance model of the Disability Benefits Plan. The politics and hard feelings around this issue were as nasty as I had ever seen during many years of attending the Annual General Meeting.

Another important issue is the current shift in the political leadership of the Society. More than anything else, this may have long term implications far beyond the MTS staff concerns and the tone of the Annual General Meeting. There are fewer and fewer candidates from large Metro Associations running for the Provincial Executive of The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Currently there are only two of eleven Provincial Executive members who are from Metro Teacher Associations.

What you will not read in The Manitoba Teacher! Cont'd

There can be many reasons for a lack of Metro members on the Provincial Executive (P.Ex.). I served two years on the P.Ex. of the Society and left feeling that many of the important political decisions had already been made before we sat down to debate them around the Executive table. I felt I could do more on behalf of teachers by going back to work at the local level through the WTA. It's not that experienced Metro association people cannot run, it is that they are choosing not to run. If experienced Metro voices are not part of the decision-making process around the Provincial Executive table, where does it leave an organization that is to speak on behalf of all teachers of Manitoba?

A final issue of some concern is the role of the former President of the Society, Brian Ardern seems to be playing. His term of office as Past President ended in May of the last school year and to my knowledge he is not currently on the staff of the Society nor working as an educator, yet he is still present at some important events. The WTA Vice-President and I attended the third reading of the changes made to The Teachers' Pension Act in September at the Manitoba Legislature. Mr. Ardern was present and sat with the current President of the Society. It is my understanding that they both met with the Minister after the legislative session had finished that day. Mr. Ardern was also sitting at the MTS table for the Premier's annual dinner in the fall in Winnipeg and sat with the MTS President during the NDP banquet held in Brandon recently during the party's annual convention.

Mr. Ardern is free to attend all of these functions and MTS is free to have him present. The concern I continue to have is, what message does this send to the membership, the MTS staff, those in government and others about the fact that someone who is not an employee or an elected official of MTS appears to have such a high profile and potential influence in the organization?

All of these issues are like the elephant in the room that everyone can see, but no one wants to admit exists or is even present. The good work MTS has done in a number of areas represents only one side of the page. These other issues have the potential to be very important to the future direction of the Society and need to be addressed in an open and frank manner as well.



CAP Math and the New Curriculum

The following is a copy of a letter sent to the WSD regarding the CAP Math assessment and the implementation of the new curriculum:

I would like to thank you and The Winnipeg School Division for the opportunity the Vice-President and I had to attend the Math Inservice on February 12, 2009 at J.B. Mitchell. The day was informative and it was important to hear what the WSD is planning to do first hand. The WTA was asked to provide feedback and I have chosen to put that response in writing.

Content In-servicing:

It is my understanding that some of this shift in both curriculum delivery and the CAP math component has been driven by changes to the provincial math curricula. Based on the handouts provided and the discussions, it appears that the new curriculum is a significant shift in what teachers in the WSD have been delivering. It seems that prior to changing the CAP assessment to reflect the new math components, the Division should spend a year inservicing elementary teachers in the new math curricula so that they are then in a position to better deliver the materials and assess students through the CAP process the following year.

Field Testing:

The field testing concept is a positive idea; however, it only reflects the first step in a much longer process. Those at the workshop were asked to go back to their schools, assess between 6-8 students and then provide feedback. To support this, the teachers had access to a half-day of substitute time, if they wished. The timelines for this is approximately two weeks.

To get a clear sense of how these changes will impact teachers and students; the next step should involve a pilot of the CAP components and be completed by teachers with classrooms of children. If this stage in the pilot is completed in a limited number of schools, at varying grade levels and then changes are recommended, it would more accurately reflect what teachers are expected to do. This would seem to be the next logical step in the development of the materials and process that will need to be in place prior to system-wide implementation.

Printed Materials:

On numerous occasions during the presentations, it was made clear that what was being presented is a work-in-progress and printed items are evolving or have not yet been developed. This is both a positive and potentially a negative factor. The fact that those developing the materials are looking for input from teachers is positive. The fact that this discussion is taking place in February with the possibility of system-wide implementation for September 2009 looming in the background generates concerns.

Any type of system-wide implementation of the new curriculum and/or a modified CAP needs to be supported by the timely availability of complete sets of printed documents to support what will take place. If the complete sets of printed materials are not ready for classroom teacher/student use prior to the start of the fall term then any system-wide implementation is a risky proposal. The fear is that it will fall to the classroom teacher to make a process work that has not yet been fully developed or thought through.

On-Line Training:

As part of one of the presentations, it was indicated that some of the professional development for this new process is to be made available through computerized training over the Internet.

The WTA has a number of concerns with this training process. The first, and most obvious, is the ability of the WSD to deliver anything through its computer system. The most recent membership experience with the WSD and computers was the system-wide implementation of the elementary computerized report cards last school year. The only way to describe this implementation is disastrous. It became obvious quickly that the system was not ready for the volume of use and the types of demands to be placed on it. The fact that the on-line report card was not piloted and

thoroughly tested prior to system-wide implementation left the classroom teachers to pick up the pieces and make it work. Whether done through the WSD network or an independent service provider, the WTA wants to ensure that all elements of the computerized system are working and have been thoroughly tested prior to system-wide implementation.

The second issue is the delivery of training outside of the school day. The entire shift in curriculum and the CAP math process reflects a major change. The WTA expects that whatever professional development and/or training are required to complete this shift will be done during the school day/school year. It needs to be clearly indicated that the computerized training component of the process needs to be done during the school day through some type of professional development activity.

WTA Recommendations:

2009-2010 School Year

- * New math curriculum inservicing system-wide
- * Continue the development and piloting of all related materials for implantation of the new math curriculum through the CAP assessment

2010-2011 School Year

- * Continue implementation of the new math curriculum system-wide and provide additional inservicing, if required
- * Implement the new CAP system-wide including the additions to the math components

In addition to what we heard and saw at the February inservice session, we have also received feedback from members who are involved in the field-testing process that reflect the comments already provided in this document.

Many WSD elementary teachers feel the division has implemented major changes to systems that directly impact them and their students with little or no respect for the time required to make these changes work. Systems are not thoroughly tested, meaningful pilots are not done and then it falls to the classroom teacher and local school administrators to muddle through. Major changes in any environment is difficult and can be disruptive. Implementing this type of change when materials are not fully developed, computerized systems not fully tested and functioning, and members not understanding what is to be taught or assessed can only be a formula for disaster.

Please take the time to provide the human, material and financial resources required to ensure that things are ready prior to full implementation.

Does the End Justify the Means?

by: Joan Fransen, WTA Vice-President

One of the activities to which I look forward each morning is reading the local papers. It's become a task of the Vice-President over the years to keep track of articles pertinent to the Association. This involves a range of topics including WSD events, items related to the teaching profession or labour movement and what's reported about other education jurisdictions. My routine usually follows a search of a variety of online pages—breaking news, local news, editorials, letters to the editor, online blogs, etc.

Recently, I came across a report of a local school and its fundraising success. I was so caught up in the event that I don't have a clue for what funds were being raised. The school reward for achieving its goal was to tape a student, a teacher and the principal to the wall. I had to read the article several times to make sure I wasn't missing something. Maybe I'm naïve but I couldn't quite understand how this was a good thing.

I corresponded with someone closer to the event whose response, in jest, was that it was good there wasn't a fire alarm. My response was "So it's okay to send the message to students and the public that taping educators to the wall is appropriate?" This begs other questions. What type of image should educators portray? Aren't we role models? Do we expect students of all age levels to understand and discern that this is not an acceptable activity?

We often hear of motivational challenges being presented to students at this time of year—often for February's "I Love to Read" activities. Is there a point when an activity may cross the line?

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not against extrinsic motivation. It's been very successful for me over the years. I guess what I wonder is why activities have to become more and more outrageous each time. Will we put ourselves into a position that there isn't something more outrageous to outdo that of the time before?

Another thing to consider is whether the line between the end and the means becomes blurred. When the reward is so remarkable that people forget what the reason behind it is, things become confusing. Discerning which part is the end and which part is the means shouldn't be difficult—even if the means comes after the end! I would hope that any activity would celebrate the end to such an extent that the participants understand why they are being rewarded. In other words, I don't believe it's necessary to disguise an activity.

For example, encouraging students to increase their reading is a fantastic thing—even more fantastic if the goal is achieved. Setting realistic goals is also great. At some point, one needs to instill the skills that will help the development of intrinsic motivation.

I think what I'm trying to get at is that we need to remember that if we want to represent a profession, we need to behave in a professional manner.



TIPS IN SUBMITTING CLAIMS UNDER YOUR MANULIFE GROUP EXTENDED HEALTH CARE POLICY 98240

- **Original claim receipts are always required.** Copies will not be accepted (other than when Manulife is the second payor.)
- **Prescription Drugs:** there is a \$1200. threshold for drug expenses incurred in each Pharmacare benefit year (April to March) for an insured or family **under age 65**. Reimbursement of drug claims will cease once Manulife has paid \$1200. At that point, the claim is returned and the insured **must** apply for Manitoba Pharmacare. **Once application has been made, resubmit the claim to Manulife with a copy of the Pharmacare application. Your annual deductible will be entered on the system and future claims for the year will continue to be paid until the deductible is reached. To avoid payment interruption it is suggested that everyone make application.**
 - ⇒ *Threshold for insureds age 65 or over is \$800 before they must forward their Pharmacare Form to ManuLife.*
 - ⇒ *Pharmacare applications are available at any pharmacy.*
- **For all Practitioners: i.e. Physiotherapist, Athletic Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, Massage Therapist, Audiologist, Psychologist, Chiropractor, Chiropodist/Podiatrist, Osteopath, Naturopath and Dietician.** Be sure that the receipt clearly indicates the Practitioner's Provincial registration number and their designation:
 - e.g. **Chiropractor** - D.C. (Doctor of Chiropractry)
 - Massage Therapist** - R.M.T. (Registered Massage Therapist)
 - Psychologist** - (Ph.D. in Psychology)
 - ⇒ *Some generic receipts do not always indicate this information.*
 - ⇒ *This information will be necessary on each claim.*
- For **Chiropractic services** incurred prior to reaching the maximum under Manitoba Health (first 12 visits in a year), **ensure** that the Chiropractor's receipt clearly specifies that the charges are for services **not** covered by Manitoba Health, i.e. '**non-insured services.**' These may include x-rays, examinations, pre- and post-treatment evaluations, instrumentation and adjunctive therapies.
- **Orthotics** (\$400. per three (3) calendar years): due to fraudulent practices by some suppliers in recent years, Manulife has been forced to tighten the requirements for reimbursement of this benefit. The following documentation is required with each claim:
 - From the physician/practitioner:**
 1. A copy of the recommendation or referral from the prescribing physician, podiatrist or chiropodist, which includes the medical condition(s) necessitating the use of orthotic appliances.
 - From the supplier:**
 2. Copies of the biomechanical examination and gait analysis performed.
 3. Complete description of the process used to create the orthotics, including the casting technique and the raw materials used.
 4. Confirmation that the orthotics have been paid in full (supporting receipt) or confirmation that the patient has received the appliances.

Manulife Group Extended Health Care Tips for Submitting Claims cont'd.

Out-of-Country Travel/ManuAssist [9505] (*for active members only - not retirees*):

For medical expenses in excess of \$200:

In the event you or your dependents incur over \$200. in expenses, contact ManuAssist via the toll-free number on the reverse of your *blue* card (active members only.)

- ⇒ The caller provides ManuAssist with the **Employee's** name, policy, certificate number and the imprinted ID number on the card (9505).
- ⇒ ManuAssist will confirm your group coverage with Manulife and arrange for the payment of medical expenses (provided they were contacted before the expense was incurred.)
- ⇒ You will be asked to sign an authorization form, allowing them to coordinate payment of the claim on your behalf through Manitoba Health and your Manulife plan.

For medical expenses under \$200:

- ⇒ Pay for the expense and obtain receipt.
- ⇒ When you return home, submit claim to Manitoba Health.
- ⇒ Once reimbursement is received from the Provincial plan, submit 'Out-of-Province/Out-of-Canada Health Claim' form to Manulife, accompanied with copies of receipts and the statement from Manitoba Health. Manulife will pay the remaining balance of eligible expenses.

Please refer to the ManuAssist brochure that you received with your card for further details on this benefit.

As of March 1st, 2005 eye examinations, every two years, have been added to the Manulife Extended Benefit Health plan **for active members only.**

(1) **Paramedical Practitioners**

- ✍ Athletic, Occupational, Physio Therapy - combined maximum **\$750** per person, per calendar year for both practitioners combined
- ✍ Audiologist - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Chiropractor - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Dietician - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Massage Therapist - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Naturopath - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Osteopath - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Podiatrist or Chiropodist - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Psychologist - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year
- ✍ Speech Therapist - **\$500.** per person, per calendar year

(2) **Prosthetic Appliances and Miscellany**

- ✍ Surgical brassieres and breast prostheses, **\$400.** per single prosthesis or bra, per calendar year
- ✍ Expenses associated with the purchase and installation of hearing aids **\$1000.** every 5 calendar years

Teacher Welfare Committee Information

By: Mauricio Barra, WTA Teacher Welfare Committee Chair

To All WTA Members:

Given the economic times and the stress that money issues have on our personal lives, the Teacher Welfare Committee would like to know if there is a need to provide some assistance to our members.

Making money stretch from month-to-month can be difficult for many and maybe there are ways to make the budgeting process easier.

The Teacher Welfare Committee would like those who might be interested in participating in some Personal Budgeting training to please contact Mauricio Barra at mkbarra@shaw.ca

If there is an interest to have one or more sessions then we will try and plan something for mid to late May.

The deadline for response is **Friday, April 3rd, 2009.**

Take care and be well,

Mauricio Barra
Teacher Welfare Chair



Electoral Units not represented at the February Council meeting:

COTE, Mulvey, Norquay, George V, Grant Park, Isaac Newton, John M. King, King Edward, Lansdowne, Machray, Montrose, Special Ed.
— 700 Elgin Avel, William Whyte

DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES TO THE APRIL NEWSLETTER IS:

April 6th, 2009

The views expressed in articles in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Association