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# The WTA NEWS

## “There are strange things done under the midnight sun”

By: Dave Najdich, President

Those last few frosty days in December before the holiday break saw some strange happenings in the world of teacher politics.

It began with a phone call on Tuesday, December 16th. Much of what we are involved in through the office begins with these types of calls. The caller is not a crank and has been a reliable source of information over the years. It is also important to note that this person is not a WTA member or MTS employee. In rather colourful language, they asked me what was going on at MTS. Specifically, why had they fired their General Secretary, Judy Bradley? The question caught me completely off guard.

I knew that the Provincial Executive had met the previous Thursday and Friday, but I had heard nothing about the General Secretary being fired. My first reaction was this could not have occurred, so I call MTS to speak directly with the General Secretary. I could not get through to her. I then contacted the President of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, Pat Isaak, to indicate what I had heard and asked for clarification. I left this conversation feeling frustrated by the nature of the President's answers.

That Tuesday night I was shopping at one of those big box outlets and was approached by another individual who asked why the MTS had fired the General Secretary. It became obvious that individuals were aware of something going on that our local was not informed of. Over the next few days I spoke with a number of other Association Presidents in an attempt to clarify what was really taking place. No one else could answer any of the questions I had.

On December 23rd, 2008 at 6:51 PM, the following message was sent by Pat Isaak to Provincial Executive Members, Presidents and MTS staff:

Hi Everyone

On behalf of the Provincial Executive, I wanted to let you know That Judy Bradley has announced her retirement effective January 1, 2009, and Tim Duprey has announced his retirement effective December 23, 2008. We wish them both the very best in their retirements.

I hope you all enjoy a happy and restful holiday. Have a safe and happy New Year.

**“There are strange things done under the midnight sun” cont’d.**

The timeframe for the announcement made it difficult to seek clarification or even ask questions about what had taken place since the MTS offices closed earlier that day. Not only had the General Secretary left but the Chief Operating Officer of the Disability Benefits Plan had also retired. The first opportunity to ask questions about all of this occurred at a meeting of Metro Presidents’ January 5th, 2009. The only information the MTS President would confirm with the group was that the General Secretary had retired. Since this meeting I have written to the MTS President asking for further information about a number of issues linked to the retirement and hope to hear back from her in the near future.

To Judy Bradley, I would like to wish all of the best. We have disagreed on a number of items over the years, but I feel she has always acted with integrity and in a buy-the-book fashion. I believe her actions were always taken with the best interests of the Society at the core of what she did.

To Tim Duprey, I would also like to wish the best in his retirement. Tim came into the Disability Benefits Plan a number of years ago when significant changes were required. His efforts with those of the Governance Committee helped put the plan back onto a more stable financial footing.

As a final thought about what has transpired, I have participated and watched teacher politics over a very long time. As a grizzled veteran, I am left wondering if this entire exercise has been less about the current General Secretary leaving MTS and more about who will replace her. I trust this sudden opening does not prevent the national search from proceeding. It is important the most qualified person be hired and not someone’s friend just for expediency. The Society is at too critical a juncture for this to happen. The new General Secretary must be seen to be fairly selected to ensure the support of all of the membership. We will be watching with great interest.

## Meetings & More!

by: Joan Fransen, Vice-President

The Winnipeg Teachers' Association has regular opportunities to meet with the School Division. We meet monthly with the Chief Superintendent and Director of Human Resources through the President's Committee. We also meet monthly with the Director and Assistant Director of Human Resources to discuss Personnel issues. Finally, we meet several times a year with representatives of the Board of Trustees through the WSD/WTA Joint Committee. These regular meetings, as well as, special meetings which occasionally arise, give us the opportunity to discuss a variety of matters. As stated in the WTA constitution, "the objects of the Association shall include the following:

- ◇ to promote and to advance the cause of education;
- ◇ to foster active participation by the members of the Association;
- ◇ to promote the welfare of the members."

Through our discussions we are able to communicate with our employer, taking time to develop a working relationship, that in the end, serves to address the objects stated above. Recently, at one of these meetings, the Association was given an invitation to participate in the Winnipeg School Division's Job Fair. This event, held January 10-15, 2009, is in lieu of the Division's participation in the University Education Recruitment Fairs. We value the opportunity to work jointly, providing input and/or guidance to prospective WTA members.

Having accepted the invitation, the question became what do we want to say to pre-service teachers? In the end, we decided that our goals were two-fold. First, introducing applicants to the WTA—its functions and services—is important. We created a hand-out to supplement those provided by MTS for this type of use. In our hand-out we described who our members are (teachers, substitute teachers, school administrators, clinicians, consultants, and lab assistants) and the variety of committees in place (with an invitation to consider participation). We also made a statement to describe our services.

The WTA negotiates and monitors the collective agreement, assists members in Personnel issues both at the school and divisional level, and is responsible for all benefit plans for members including dental and extended health, as well as, providing pre-retirement and maternity/parental leave seminars. The WTA also provides counseling services to deal with personal and/or family issues.

Our second goal in communicating with pre-service teachers is to make applicants aware of their rights/obligations in accepting a position. This assists in helping them to start on the right foot. For example, an applicant's verbal acceptance of a position is legally binding. Providing applicants with guidance in navigating our website to find salary information and working conditions as outlined in the collective agreement helps them to be aware of their rights. After all, "Knowledge is power." Finally, we provided a short checklist of items to complete (signing the contract, making life insurance, extended health, and dental decisions).

This is a new venture for us and we have enjoyed the opportunity.

WTA 2008/2009 Pre-Retirement Seminar  
REGISTRATION FORM

**Applicant Data**

----- <b>First Name</b>	----- <b>Initial</b>	----- <b>Last Name</b>
Social Insurance Number: ----- ( <i>required to obtain data for you from TRAF</i> )		
Home Address: -----		Postal Code: -----
Home Phone: -----		Work Phone: -----
Spouse or Partner (Full Name) -----		
His/Her date of birth - <i>Note: this information is required.</i> -----		
Will your spouse/partner be attending?    Yes    [    ]    No    [    ]		Month - Date - Year
There is a charge of \$15.00 <i>per attendee</i> for materials, coffee, dinner, etc.		
<i>Please indicate below if you have any dietary restrictions or allergies:</i>		
Specify type of dietary restriction/allergy: ----- -----		

**Retirement Seminar Data**

I would like to register for the Pre-Retirement Seminar on:

**March 17th, 2009**

at McMaster House Arnett Auditorium, 191 Harcourt Street commencing at 5:00 PM

T.R.A.F. will provide you with a maximum of TWO printouts of retirement information based on possible retirement dates that you designate. Retirement dates may be milestones (e.g. age 65), or specific dates (e.g. June 2010). *Please NOTE: estimates will not be provided to anyone but the pension plan member.*

----- Retirement date #1	----- Retirement date #2
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Confirmations will be sent to applicants. Please note that enrollment is limited (maximum of 80). Please apply early. Cheques are payable to **The Winnipeg Teachers' Association**, payment (\$15.00 per attendee) is due with the application. Mail the application and cheques to the WTA office, 202-2639 Portage Avenue R3J 0P7. **Deadline for applications is one month prior to the seminar.** If you have any questions please contact Glenda Shepherd, 831-7104.

# WTA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

All parts of the application form must be completed fully and submitted on time for consideration of the application

Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Location: \_\_\_\_\_

# of years Association involvement: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the following precisely and accurately, and if necessary, append additional pages.

## 1. Major Association/Society Professional...:

Area of involvement	Dates
a) Council Rep.	_____
Total # of years of service	_____
b) Executive (specify roles)	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
c) WTA Committees (specify)	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
d) Other committee involvement (specify)	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**2. Major contribution to the Association (e.g. Service to the Association/membership through advocacy/support.)**

Specific areas:

Dates

_____	_____
_____	_____

Please provide any further information on the nominee's contribution to the Association that you may feel the committee should consider.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In addition, please provide the names of two members who would provide additional information. The Committee may contact these people should they require further information. You may only support ONE application per year.

Name

School

Phone #

1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____

Name of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this form to the WTA office via FAX - 837-9698 by:  
February 15th, 2008.**

## **REMINDER: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2009/2010 WTA EXECUTIVE ELECTION**

The Executive Nominating & Elections Committee is calling for nominations for the 2009/2010 WTA Executive. If you are interested in running for a position on the Executive please contact the Association office at 831-7104 or Dee Smith, Chair, Executive Nominating & Elections Committee, Principal Sparling School.

***What is the WTA?*** The Winnipeg Teachers' Association represents all teachers, including substitutes, clinicians and lab assistants in The Winnipeg School Division. The Association negotiates for its members with the Winnipeg School Board. The WTA actively supports the well-being of all members through various committees such as Teacher Welfare, Professional Development and Public Relations.

***Who can be an Executive member?*** Any member who indicates their willingness to run for election to the Executive when the call for nominations goes out. Candidates may be asked to speak at the Election Forum during the March WTA Council meeting. The new Executive year begins on June 15th.

***What will I do if elected?*** All Executive members attend a retreat/workshop to become familiar with current issues and to determine (based on interest and experience) which committee they will Chair and/or sit on. There are committees which require less time and are ideal starting points for new members.

***What is the time commitment for an Executive member?*** There are two Executive meetings per month. The meetings start at 4:30 PM and run between two to four hours (supper is served.) There is one Council meeting per month commencing at 6:30 PM. Committees meet at times determined by their mandate, or need, and can vary from two to three times per year to once a month.

***What do I get out of it?*** Some rewards are extrinsic. Members are reimbursed for travel to Executive meetings and for dependent care. The opportunities for Professional Development are many and all are encouraged to take advantage of them. Substitutes are paid for by the Association when individuals attend PD opportunities.

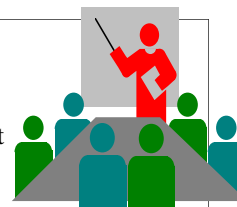
Some rewards are intrinsic. Members of the Executive play an important role in achieving improvements in the working lives of teachers. They gain an insider's view of the politics; negotiations and goals of those involved in education throughout the Province. Executive members know that they have helped all their colleagues by serving their Professional Association.

***Is that all?*** No. You will get to work with a group of fun-loving, hard-working, supportive people who may soon become a group of trusted friends.

For further information please contact either the Association office or Dee Smith.

Electoral Units not represented at the December Council meeting:

COTE, Dufferin, General Wolfe, George V, Glenelm, Grosvenor, J.B. Mitchell, John M. King, Kelvin, Lab Assistants, Montrose, Mulvey, Niji Mahkwa, Norquay, Ralph Brown, Riverview, Substitutes, Support Services, Tyndall Park, William Whyte, WAEC - 700 Elgin Ave



## *Reminder...*

### *Maternity/Parental Leave and the Dental Plan...*

*Please be advised that individuals who go on (or are currently on) Maternity/Parental Leave are covered for the length of the leave 54 weeks.*

#### *ManuLife Information*

#### **Life Events for Enrollment Status Change**

An employee who had waived coverage initially is eligible to join the plan upon:

- ◇ marriage (including common-law after 12 months cohabitation)
- ◇ legal separation/divorce
- ◇ birth, legal guardianship or adoption of the first eligible child
- ◇ death of a spouse or dependent child
- ◇ termination of a common-law relationship; or
- ◇ involuntary loss of coverage under spouse's benefit plan (does not include retirement)

*Note: you must enroll within 90 days of the life event occurring.*

### **Quote of the Month**

**"Tis education forms the common mind:/Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.**

—Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

### ***FYI***

**Manulife - "Wellness Report" & Newsletters available at:**

**[www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits](http://www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits)**

**DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES TO THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER IS:**

**Wednesday, January 30th, 2009**

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