

The WTA NEWS

Editor: Carol Boyko
Gordon Bell High School
FAX: 7839469

WTA Office - 831-7104/FAX - 837-9698
e-mail addresses: wta@wta.mb.ca
pres@wta.mb.ca - - - vpres@wta.mb.ca

MTS and Change

By: Dave Najduch, WTA President

In the month of May each year I spend a large chunk of my free time reading the two-inch binder provided by MTS for the coming Annual General Meeting (AGM). The resolution package provided this year is a most interesting one. The Provincial Executive (PEX) is bringing forward 57 resolutions and eight local associations are bringing forward a total of 38 others.

Many of the resolutions are designed to clean-up wording or make minor adjustments in areas of policy. This year however, there are a number of local association resolutions that look at making significant structural changes to how the MTS operates. The Brandon Teachers' Association has the largest number of local resolutions totaling 14, the most significant of these would see:

- ◇ The MTS President elected at AGM once again.
- ◇ The MTS General Secretary have the hiring authority for all staff.
- ◇ The PEX document their use of Society time for the coming year.
- ◇ Access to all legal opinions that impact decisions made at the AGM.
- ◇ The MTS General Secretary hired through the PEX based on a recommendation of a Committee of either the General Secretary or Assistant General Secretary, the President or Vice-President and three Presidents drawn randomly at an open meeting of the PEX.
- ◇ Require PEX members applying for staff jobs at MTS to resign from the PEX.

A resolution that has generated a great deal of discussion and has the potential to cause some controversy at the AGM comes from the Louis Riel Teachers' Association (LRTA). This resolution would see the AGM direct the PEX to extend the contract of the current MTS General Secretary for two more years beyond its May 2011 expiration. LRTA also wants to change the mechanism for selecting the PEX to one that would allow members to vote for whom they wish instead of having to vote for a set number of candidates at each AGM.

The WTA is bringing forward two resolutions this year that may also generate some discussion and debate. The first would see a regionally based system set up for the selection of PEX members. This structure would create eleven regions across the province based on an approximately equal number of MTS members in each and then have the region select its PEX member through a locally based election. The second WTA resolution would see the removal of the MTS policy on Provincial Bargaining. Our Association continues to believe local bargaining is in the best interests of our members and would like the MTS policy removed.

The actual election for PEX members this year should be interesting as well. There are five seats on PEX up for grabs and a total of eleven candidates, including five incumbents running to fill the spots. The good news is that there is real choice in this election and the opportunity to make some significant change if that is the will of the AGM. The downside to this is that once again there are only two candidates running from the larger Associations in the Metro area for the eleven seats. The PEX continues to have a clear lack of membership from larger local Associations.

It would seem that some of the locals in attendance this year at AGM are looking for some substantive change to the internal mechanisms by which the MTS operates. This combined with a large slate of candidates for the PEX could generate a significant shift in the direction the MTS is to head in the years to come. Clearly there is desire for change by some, it will be interesting to see if that can be reflected in the outcome of the resolutions and the vote for PEX.

Cautious Optimism—CAP Update

By: Joan Fransen, Vice-President

I recently attended the training sessions for the second Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP) e-module. For those of you who are not elementary school teachers, the e-modules are professional development modules conducted online for those participating in CAP testing. Each person must complete two modules prior to administering the revised math CAP test next fall. It is not my intent, at this point, to discuss the merits or shortcomings of online training, but rather to discuss the content.

Once again, each school was instructed to send an administrator and a teacher to a half-day session; together, the team will lead the rest of its school staff in a half-day professional development session. The first e-module focused on understanding the math curriculum. The second one revolved around understanding, administering, and assessing the new CAP “tool”—now referred to as “N-6 Mathematics Assessment.”

There is reason to feel optimistic. Many times throughout the session, attendees were reminded that individual teachers and each school would need to use professional judgment when conducting the initial assessment. To my understanding, the process is much less rigid than previously. In the fall teachers will conduct the “initial assessment.” This is the portion that reflects the moment in time that will be reported to the School Division. Teachers will gather information about their students in ways that make sense to their situation. Observation through group-work or conducting individual inventories is at the discretion of the teacher. The intent is to determine next steps for programming for students. There seems to be no expectation of adherence to a “script.” In fact, information that has been observed informally throughout the course of learning will be honoured. As I made my way through the e-module, I viewed videos demonstrating many different teaching/assessment strategies.

It is clearly evident that a great deal of time and expertise has been exerted by your colleagues to develop the revised CAP tool, conduct the field tests, put together the e-module, and assist in training. Through the auspices of the Director of Assessment and Instructional Support Services, consultants, support teachers, school administrators, and teachers have spent many hours of time—much of their own time—getting to this point. Each school was instructed to set aside professional development time for working through the program. After I attended the first (of four) half-day sessions, I spent close to two hours viewing the e-module. Admittedly, I rushed through it. That is to say, I believe, in order to do it justice it will take more than two hours to complete. It is important for those participating to receive adequate time to work on it. If your school is not using professional development time—during the instructional day—to be trained, please let us know.

Next year a division-wide pilot will be conducted. The Division has indicated feedback will be welcomed. Teachers will continue to have access to the same amount of substitute time. Although some members may use the time for conducting the assessment, others may use it for planning the ongoing programming for individuals and/or entire classes. Time has also been offered for the school leadership team (those who attended the first two training sessions) and a few others to return for additional professional development intended to assist in the ongoing programming needs of the school. The intent is that the document will become part of ongoing planning for the year.

Once again, I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the sessions in order to see, first hand, what will become a big part of next year’s learning. I welcome your feedback as you transition to the revised CAP.

Reminder...

Please remember that the staff vacancy bulletins will start to appear online and in print in May. They are available for teachers to read when they wish, however you still must adhere to the timelines provided.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

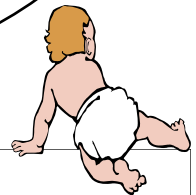
The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.

- Bertrand Russell

(On second thought, the good life starts only when you stop wanting a better one.)

Manulife Extended Travel Coverage

Please be advised that for WTA members who are anticipating extended periods of travel (i.e. those individuals who are going on Deferred Salary Leave Plan (DSLPP)) Manulife will only cover the extended travel if individuals have the **prior** approval of Manitoba Health to extend provincial health coverage for the length of their travel. If you do not obtain Manitoba Health's approval for the full duration of your travel you **will not** have Manulife's extended travel coverage for that portion for which provincial coverage does not exist. In this event, we suggest the purchase of individual travel insurance.



Electoral Units not represented at the April Council meeting:

Andrew Mynarski, Children of the Earth, David Livingstone, DLC, Dufferin, Glenelm, Grosvenor, Harrow, Lab Assistants, LaVerendrye, Luxton, Mulvey, Riverview, Sacre Coeur, Support Services

REMINDER

If you are contemplating maternity leave during the summer months and need more information please contact either Henry Shyka or Nancy Kerr - 888-7961 regarding Employment Insurance (EI) benefits.

Deadline for submission of articles for the June newsletter is:

May 20th, 2010

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

Report on the CAPSLE Conference: The Rocky Road Ahead... Balancing Competing Interests, April 2010, Calgary, AB

By: Jennie Matteis, WTA Treasurer

I had the privilege of attending the 2010 CAPSLE Conference held in Calgary in April. As in the past the conference was very informative. This year the focus was on privacy legislation and how computer networking affects this legislation.

There were 46 sessions offered from “Equality Rights and Accommodation in the Classroom”, to “Poor No More.” Also, there were six sessions on “Privacy and the Computer” - Facebook; Twitter, Blogging, etc.) I attended eight different sessions; each being very informative and eye-opening.

One session in particular that was very educational was “Windows on the World, Social Networking Sites and the Law” facilitated by Brian A. Varl, an educational lawyer. Mr. Varl stated that people believe that if they are sitting all alone in a room using the computer then it is private. This is an extremely false sense of security. For example, even if you have the privacy setting on when using Facebook, your account can be accessed.

If a complaint is lodged the first thing a lawyer looks at is social network sites eg. Facebook, My Space, Twitter, UTube, Blog, etc. In 2008 an 11-part complaint was lodged against Facebook for using individuals information for advertising purposes. The investigation by the Privacy Commission regarding the complaints has just concluded. There has been some improvement, but there is still a long way to go. Most individuals are not aware of how little privacy they have on these network sites. The police, lawyers and employers use these sites to acquire information on individuals ie. criminals, clients or employees.

It was stressed that we may think we are being very safe by setting our privacy settings for our friends, however we forget that our friends have friends who have friends, etc. etc. So be aware that our pictures and viewpoints are not private.

The dangers of networking sites are very real. I would advise that you should be very careful what you post on these sites whether it is pictures or text.

If you would like more information on the studies done or want to hear more about CAPSLE please contact me through the WTA office.

Report on the CAPSLE Conference: The Rocky Road Ahead... Balancing Competing Interests, April 2010, Calgary, AB

The Poor No More Experience

A Canadian documentary on poverty screens for an audience at CAPSLE

By: Christine Lachance, WTA AGM Committee Chair

This April, with the consent of the WTA Executive, I was again given the great opportunity to attend CAPSLE (the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law and Education) in Calgary, AB. As always, the conference offered an excellent variety of speakers and workshops.

There was an immense focus on media and social networking in many of the sessions. However, the session that spoke loudest to me was the final workshop I attended, which was a screening of a documentary. Titled *Poor No More*, the Canadian film is an examination of poverty in three countries: Canada, Ireland, and Sweden.

Documentary host Mary Walsh brought us back to the Great Depression, where the roots of “modern poverty” began. The rebuilding that happened in Canada as a result of the Depression was a great idea, and saw the implementation of stronger unions, EI, and a better health system. Why, then, does it seem that some of this groundwork seems to be coming undone for some Canadians?

The documentary provided some uneasy information regarding Canada. Seven million Canadians earn less than \$20 000 per year. A welfare system meant to lessen the burdens of families forces them to liquidate any assets of financial value prior to being eligible for any money. This has resulted in a Welfare system that demoralizes and is a virtual guarantee of permanent poverty for many. Women are the hardest hit in Canada. The UN has repeatedly informed the Canadian government that poverty in such a wealthy country is not acceptable, but no overhaul of the welfare system to date has met up to UN standards. Funding for such programs is done primarily through taxation. Thanks in large part to massive corporate tax cuts, that funding is becoming harder to come by. Big business and media corporations in our country have been known to invest in offshore accounts in “tax havens” to avoid whatever taxes are still owed. If those corporate taxes had not been cut, the Canadian government would have \$333 billion in collected funds. This would be enough to fund improved health care, a national childcare program, national elderly care, a 50% tuition cut at all major universities, and \$20 billion left to “play with.”

Following these hard facts, the documentary takes us to Ireland. Here, the saving grace of an unstable economy is free university education. In a country of less than 5 million, their largest work force comes from the shop and retail segment. Sadly, the majority of these employees are part time. Upon joining the EU, Ireland cut their corporate taxes, in the same manner as Canada. This opened up the opportunity for outside corporations to up smaller operations in Ireland and sell them off in pieces. One such example was the Waterford Crystal industry. Workers knew their company had been purchased, but were given no warning when they were all fired and locked out. The outside business owners profited, while the Irish workers suffered and were left to join a workforce of over-qualified shop workers.

From Ireland, the documentary finishes in Sweden, a country that seems to be doing things right. Sweden’s economy runs on a social partnership between labour, government, and corporations. The trick seems to be heavy but equal taxation of everyone. As a result, Sweden is number one when it comes to childcare, the status of women, elderly care, health care, and unions. Did you know that, in Sweden, McDonald’s employees are unionized? 70% of all of Sweden’s work force is. In fact, union representatives are board members in all major corporations; it’s the law. The 1909 general strike in Sweden was enough proof for the government that the workers were a force to be reckoned with and would mobilize to get what they deserved.

The benefits to Sweden’s high taxes and social partnerships are tremendous. Families in Sweden receive the equivalent of \$150 per month per child, regardless of income. There are 16 months of parental leave, and your child is guaranteed a placement in childcare programming. Every year, each parent gets 10 mandatory parental leave days to attend activities with their children. To ice the cake, university is free for everyone. Thanks to their strong unions and taxation, there are no “working poor” in Sweden, and they have no need for a welfare system. Isn’t this the ideal? Isn’t this what the Canadian government was aiming for 10 years ago when they boldly stated they wanted to abolish poverty in Canada? If the mechanisms could be put in place, we could rival Sweden.

The documentary leaves the viewers with a clear message: get angry, get informed, mobilize, and take action. The Canadian government needs to make it a priority to see their entire population become “poor no more.”

The WTTA NEWS
The Winnipeg Teachers' Association

Retirement Reception

2010

Wednesday, June 9th, 2010

7:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Shaarey Zedek Synagogue

561 Wellington Crescent

Doors Open – 6:45 PM

Presentations – 7:45 PM

Door Donation – \$15.00

This celebration is to honour ALL retiring members of the WTA and is open to everyone.

For further information call

Tina Garton, Tec Voc

Additional parking available at:

St. Mary's Academy

Unitarian Church

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer