



President's Message

Marcela Cabezas

Masks have become part of our daily ensemble. Many teachers spent time over the summer finding just the right ones to incorporate into their wardrobe. Some searched for the ones with nose clips to keep their glasses from fogging up. Others sought cutely patterned masks to delight our youngest students. And others purchased masks with puns and words of wisdom to provoke conversation amongst older kids and colleagues. This was the time when masks were about form over function. And then came Code Orange and function won over form.

On October 22nd, medical grade masks became the new style for those who crossed cohorts. They were used to keep each other and ourselves safer. They are an added layer of protection amidst the many strategies employed to keep schools safe. Teachers got a clear message about the level of concern government has for us when it was revealed that the masks provided to school divisions were decades old and their effectiveness problematic.

Recent bills introduced in the Manitoba Legislature demonstrate this government is poised to play political games with how we bargain and with the public education system itself during a pandemic, while teachers toil away in their classes. These cheap shots are a vile distraction at a time when MTS's attention needs to be laser focussed on our members' health and welfare. These are conversations better suited for another time, but the Premier insists he can walk and chew gum at the same time. How privileged he is. Maybe he and his caucus need to chew gum right now to clear their ears because they do not seem to be hearing us clearly. The LRTA and MTS have not ceased in urging those in positions of power for immediate changes and for more supports for you. The masks muffle your voices, but we hear you. Loud and clear.



Additionally, the \$85 million sent from the Federal government to support schools during the pandemic has not been shared with the school divisions by the Pallister government. The recent announcement to create a remote learning unit does nothing to provide immediate assistance to the struggling teachers in the schools.

But I digress. I do, however, want to talk about another type of mask that seems to be growing in popularity. I was once an aficionado of this type of mask back in 2010. It is sheer and invisible. On the outside you look completely normal, happy in fact. But this type of mask is used to cover up what is happening deep on the inside.

Ten years ago, as I returned to work after baby number one, I was struggling to find that elusive-work/life balance that so many parents had spoken of. (Spoiler alert – it does not exist. I learned to give up being a perfectionist and to be content with doing the best I could both at home and at work.) At the same time, my mom was battling cancer for the second time. There was a lot of stuff happening in my life. More than I could manage at the time.

Wearing my invisible mask involved a morning routine. Use the six-minute drive each day to cry in my car. Wear sunglasses to obscure my tears from other drivers. Make sure to have Kleenex in the glove box. Carry eyeliner in my purse to fix my make up. Take a deep breath, lock the car door behind me, and enter the school to start the day.

I share this with you because masks are now required in schools. As I mentioned at the outset, we all wear different kinds of masks for a variety of reasons. I worry about the number of people simultaneously wearing both literal and figurative masks right now. The spark in their eyes is slowly fading as the double masks are gradually suffocating them.

The pandemic has proven to be one huge energy suck, but so too are interminable asks of us at work. Expectation levels do not appear to have decreased. With report cards just behind us and parent

conferences fast approaching, it can feel like we are operating in a strange “business as usual” school year when things are innately out of the realm of normal. When few things seem to be coming off the table, members will quickly find themselves in emotional holes that may take years to surface from.

The calls to my family doctor and to MTS’s [Educator Assistance Program](#) were key to my recuperation. At the time, I gave myself a slew of reasons to not call them, but eventually I did. The journey to better health was long, but without the help I received, I shudder to think of where I would be now.

It is for this reason that I remind each member who has contacted me to share their emotional struggles to prioritize themselves. It is not our natural inclination as teachers to do that but if we think of the safety lesson they teach you on airplanes, you cannot be expected to help others if you skip putting your oxygen mask on first.

Some might say its brave to share this story, but what each of you is doing everyday in your schools is brave beyond compare. If you need help, please make those calls.

There is strength to be found in sharing your story with others. Invitations from the Division have come to communicate your concerns. Meetings with members of the Senior Leadership Team are now being held in schools. Make yourself heard however you feel most comfortable.

LRTA and MTS continue to communicate your struggles to the powers that be. Gains come slowly and sporadically. MTS was successful in lobbying the suspension of Grade 12 exams in January 2021. As well, they advocated for the use of masks in schools and won that battle back in the fall. Recently in Louis Riel, the Division took an additional step to encourage students in all grades to use masks in schools all day long. Most recently, MTS successfully advocated for the return of the three PD days taken from us at the outset of the year.

Many times, I have closed my messages to you with the statement, “Together, we are stronger.” I truly mean that. We are louder together. As a collective, we cannot be ignored. The increase of teachers’ voices has caught the attention of the media and government. So too did the recently penned open letter signed by educators such as you and me from across the province.

We are the LRTA. We are MTS. Write your MLA, circulate posts on social media, and add your story to the mix. With the recent move to red level restrictions province wide, except for in schools, there is one more mask type of mask to discuss in this message: that of a *luchador*. Yes, the words can mean *wrestler* in Spanish. But it also means *fighter* in the figurative sense. It is time to change up the mask and make yourself heard.

The electorate needs to know and understand that we need their voices to join ours. We need change and we need it now.

Use your voice as I continue to elevate yours.

Still fighting the good fight,

Marcela

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| • P.1 President’s Message | P.2 President’s Message (cont’d) | P.3 Provincial Bargaining FAQs |
| • P.4 MTS Fiscal Outlook | P.5 MTS Fiscal Outlook (cont’d) | P.6 Importance of PD |
| • P.7 Code of Professional Practice | P.8 MTS Townhall/Calendar and Contact Info | |

FAQ: Provincial Bargaining

Reprinted from the Manitoba Teachers' Society www.mbteach.org

What is single-tier provincial bargaining?

Currently, each of the 38 bargaining units negotiate separate collective agreements. Single-tier provincial bargaining means that all teachers, except those in the DSFM, will have one collective agreement, negotiated at a central table. The Manitoba Teachers' Society would be the bargaining agent for all teachers while the minister of education would appoint the employer bargaining agent to represent divisions. Provincial bargaining for teachers is the norm in the rest of Canada. Manitoba is the last province with a system of solely local bargaining.

What happens to DSFM?

The Division-Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine will not be affected by any changes, given its unique minority French-language status and constitutional education management rights.

Is provincial bargaining good or bad?

The theory behind the provincial bargaining model is that, if followed as intended, this model ensures greater equity in salaries and working conditions across divisions. Across the province, there are currently variances in collective agreement language regarding items such as salaries, preparation time, extra-curricular activities and more.

Does MTS support provincial bargaining?

In 2011, bargaining principles and models for a single-tier and two-tier provincial bargaining system were adopted into MTS policy at Provincial Council.

MTS supports single-tier provincial bargaining, subject to the following conditions:

1. Teachers remain governed under the Labour Relations Act.
2. MTS will bargain directly with the Province of Manitoba (the funder).
3. Bargaining must be fair and with an open scope.
4. The mechanisms for dispute resolution, whether strike or interest arbitration, must be without limitation.
5. The best provisions from existing collective agreements should be the standard for the new contract.
6. The membership of MTS will remain, as it currently exists.

Are there concerns about the government's provincial bargaining bill?

Yes. This bill incorporates the division's ability to pay into the arbitration process, which impedes the neutrality of an arbitration board. This clause is cause for concern, as it is reminiscent of legislation enacted in the 1990s, which undermined teacher collective bargaining. A critical piece of a fair system of bargaining is an open, unbiased, independent arbitration process. Since arbitration is the only dispute resolution process available to teachers, it is imperative that this process remains virtuous.

Is my current agreement void?

Current collective agreements will remain in effect for the time being.

When does this bill come into effect?

This bill must first move through the legislative passage for bills, before being passed. Once the bill is passed, it will come into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation. This information will come at a later date.

Economic Outlook

Manitoba's diverse economy produces balanced, stable, and steady growth, which in turn produces robust wage growth. Although the pandemic-related shutdown precipitated the steepest, deepest, and fastest downturn in history in March and April, a V-shaped recovery is well underway in Manitoba. Manitoba's solid underlying fundamentals have allowed us to side-step the worst of the pandemic-induced downturn experienced in other provinces.

Manitoba's labour market – like Manitoba's economy – is strong, stable, and resilient. Over the past two decades, Manitoba workers have witnessed average annual wage growth *greater than the national average and greater than inflation*. Likewise, Manitoba teachers secured salary increases in line with labour market trends since amalgamation (2.6% annually on average versus an average annual inflation rate of 1.8%).

With respect to 2018 and 2019, Manitoba workers have seen their wages increase by an average 2.0% per year. For 2020, the Conference Board of Canada expects wages and salaries in Manitoba to grow by 3.4%. Indeed, wages in Manitoba are currently growing at an annual pace of between 2% and 4% this year. Unfortunately, school divisions have been directed by the Province of Manitoba to offer zeros to their teachers. This position is completely detached from labour market realities in Manitoba.

We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic pushed Manitoba's economy into temporary freefall. Yet, this unprecedented downturn was short-lived. The bounce-back has been astonishing. GDP has recorded above-normal growth since May. Total employment in September was at 98.5% of the pre-pandemic peak (February), placing Manitoba at the top of the country. At this rate, Manitoba employment is on track to reach its pre-pandemic level by January 2021. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic cannot and should not be used as a smokescreen to deny Manitoba teachers fair and reasonable salary increases.

The combination of unprecedented fiscal and monetary intervention from the federal government and the Bank of Canada, respectively, established an income floor in the economy (which would lay the foundation for a recovery in household spending), kept credit markets functioning, and are facilitating a recovery in the labour market.

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was a \$2,000 per month (\$500 per week) benefit available to any worker who stopped working because of COVID-19. Total CERB payments at September 6, 2020 amounted to \$76.4 billion, much more than the estimated total net labour income lost nation-wide (\$44.6 billion). In August, the federal government created a new Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) and modified the Employment Insurance program to ensure the necessary supports were in place for those who needed them over the next several months. In late September, the federal government tabled legislation that would ensure no reduction in benefits for Canadians still relying on pandemic-related income supports. These measures continue to maintain an income floor in the Canadian economy.

Despite a collapse in Canadian household spending at the end of the first quarter and the beginning of the second quarter of 2020, household disposable income and the household saving rate spiked thanks to the above-mentioned transfers. Unsurprisingly, government income supports to households resulted in a precipitous drop in household debt, the largest quarterly decline in the household debt service ratio, and a fall in consumer insolvencies. Contrary to what one would expect during a cyclical downturn, household balance sheets actually *improved during the worst quarter ever*.

Meanwhile, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) has provided a 75 percent wage subsidy to eligible employers, shoring up labour demand, helping maintain employer-employee relationships, and facilitating a recovery in hiring. According to the Canada Revenue Agency, the CEWS supported between 105,000 and 107,000 employees in Manitoba during the worst of the downturn, and continued to support tens of thousands during the summer months. In its September 23, 2020 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada signaled its intent to extend the CEWS until the summer of 2021.

Thanks to massive government transfers to households – primarily in the form of CERB – Canadian household balance sheets improved, while the social safety net was greatly enhanced. The CERB acted as a *de facto* basic income program. As a result, this took pressure off working people during a time of unusually high unemployment. In the end, these policy choices increased labour's bargaining power and, *ipso facto*, an economic recovery. Stronger household balance sheets will support future economic growth.

Fiscal Outlook

Budgets reflect policy choices. Since forming government in 2016, the Pallister government has ploughed ahead with tax cuts and deficit reduction to pursue its long-desired root-and-branch transformation of government.

Lo and behold, the Province of Manitoba reported a surplus of \$5 million in its 2019/20 annual report. According to the Auditor General, it would have in fact posted a \$43 million surplus in 2019/20 had the government followed public sector accounting standards. Recall that the Province of Manitoba ran a \$9 million surplus in 2018/2019, according to the Auditor General. Therefore, the government has been in surplus for two consecutive fiscal years. There was obviously no fiscal crisis and no need for Bill 28!

Since 2016, the Pallister government has foregone close to \$700 million in revenue through tax cuts and has diverted \$800 million to the "Rainy Day Fund". How then could the government have balanced the books well ahead of schedule? Balancing the books was only achieved by: a) chronically underspending in key departments; b) restraining wages in the broader provincial public sector by way of unconstitutional legislation (Bill 28); and c) relying on robust revenue growth thanks to healthy economic growth and generous federal transfers.

In its 2020/21 *First Quarter Report*, the Pallister government projected a \$2.9 billion deficit in 2020/21, although the projected shortfall does not include the additional \$503 million in pandemic-related federal funding to Manitoba. Therefore, the projected deficit should be \$2.4 billion, not \$2.9 billion. The estimated loss in PST revenue in 2020/21 is only \$62 million, representing a 3% decline compared to budget. The marginal decline in PST revenue suggests greater underlying strength in the Manitoba economy than expected. Combined individual and corporate income tax revenue only declined by 10% compared to budget. These figures are far from the colossal declines originally feared in the spring and further evidence that the steep economic decline was short-lived. This then begs the question: given that the economy is recovering, will the decline in revenue be as large as projected? We have reason to believe that the shortfall presented by the Government of Manitoba is inflated.

Even if we were to believe the Province's dubious \$2.9 billion deficit projection, Manitoba's public debt would still be sustainable over the medium term. As long as the interest rate does not exceed the rate of economic growth over time, and as long as the deficit as a share of GDP declines over time, the public debt is sustainable. Government revenue growth will resume as the economy recovers and extraordinary expenses will eventually wind down, reducing the deficit. Interest rates will remain ultra-low for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the Bank of Canada has purchased hundreds of millions of dollars in short-term and long-term Manitoba debt to assist the Province in meeting its obligations during the pandemic. Thanks to this unprecedented monetary intervention, provincial borrowing costs have not increased and Manitoba's credit rating has been maintained. Therefore, despite the increase in debt, it is sustainable. Contrary to the fiscal doom and gloom peddled by the Pallister government, there is no fiscal crisis!

The Importance of Professional Development

Vice President Professional Development
Jay McGurran



I, like many of you I imagine, thought we had turned the corner in the summer and was cautiously optimistic that the outbreaks of COVID would be small and manageable come the fall. A cluster here and there, mitigated and controlled by Manitoba Public Health and then on to the next one. I was also under the impression that our public officials had worst case scenarios figured out and were prepared to mobilize quickly, should the need arise. I did not foresee the breakdown of being able to manage and trace this disease to the magnitude that we are currently experiencing today, and I certainly did not forecast the tragic numbers being reported on a daily basis. Perhaps I was overly optimistic. Perhaps I was naïve. Perhaps I was misinformed. Regardless, here we sit in school buildings across the division, wondering, “What’s next?”

As for professional development during these difficult times, I imagine that might be the last thing on your mind. And justifiably so. Preparing to be away from your classroom, whether your classroom be in person or online, or attending an event that happens outside of the traditional school day might not be beneficial to you at this moment. Further, sourcing quality professional development right now is exceptionally difficult and compounding this predicament is a lack of substitutes available to replace you while you are away. If there is ever a time to say “No thanks. I don’t need to deal with all that right now”, now is the time. And that’s okay.

If, however, engaging in professional development helps you to weather this brutal storm, know that PPDF will still accept applications for online events that can be consumed asynchronously outside of school hours. Further, if you are registered in a university course for the purposes of a Post-Bac, Masters or PhD., PPDF will assist in funding your education (see PPDF Guidelines for details) even if the course has already begun. Finally, if there is a professional development event that is imperative to your current teaching practise and occurs during the school day, please reach out to me to see if we can accommodate your request. I don’t know when this storm will pass, but I do know that PPDF will be on the other side eagerly waiting to accept your applications.

All the best and stay safe (at home!)

Jay McGurran

Vice President Professional Development



For any other PPDF related questions, please e-mail me at pdlrta@shaw.ca,
or call me at the LRTA office a 204-929-5782.

Code of Professional Practice

Members are bound by the following principles and each Member's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of these principles:

1. A Member's first professional responsibility is to the Member's students;
2. A Member acts with integrity and diligence in carrying out professional responsibilities;
3. A Member avoids involvement in a conflict of interest, recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological or other advantage;
4. A Member's conduct is characterised by consideration and good faith. The Member speaks and acts with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights;
5. A Member respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give the information only to authorized personnel or agencies directly concerned with the individual student's welfare;
6. A Member first directs any criticism of the professional activity and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private. Only after informing the colleague of the intent to do so, the complainant may direct in confidence the criticism to appropriate officials through the proper channels of communication. A Member shall not be considered in contravention of this Article in the following circumstances:
 - a) consulting with the Society or the Member's Local president;
 - b) taking any action that is allowed or mandated by legislation;
 - c) where the Member is acting in good faith and without malice in the discharge of the legitimate duties of the Member's appointed or elected position;
7. A Member does not bypass immediate authority to reach higher authority without first exhausting the proper channels of communication;
8. A Member makes an ongoing effort to improve professionally;
9. A Member adheres to collective agreements negotiated by the Society and its Local; and
10. A Member or group of Members makes only authorized representations to Outside Bodies on behalf of the Society or its Locals. Without the express permission of the Society, no Members conferring with Outside Bodies may explicitly or implicitly claim that they represent the Society or its Locals.

(The Society approved new Bylaws at its 2014 AGM. Bylaw IV includes the Code of Professional Practice that applies to all teachers who are members of the Society. Bylaw IV also outlines what constitutes *professional misconduct* and how the Code is enforced. The Society's Constitution and Bylaws outline the remedies or sanctions that can be imposed against any teacher who violates the Code of Professional Practice.)



USE YOUR VOICE!



**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24,
2020 | 7 P.M. – 8 P.M.**

**Join us for a telephone townhall with:
MTS President James Bedford
+ General Secretary Danielle
Fullan Kolton**

This is an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns related to COVID-19 and the education system directly with MTS representatives.

All MTS members will receive a call to join the townhall. The townhall will also be streamed on our website and Facebook page.

CONTACT US

LRTA office
204-929-5782

President
Marcela Cabezas
preslrta@shaw.ca

Collective Bargaining
Scott Wood
cblrta@shaw.ca

Professional Development
Jay McGurran
pdlrta@shaw.ca

All matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Manitoba Teachers' Society
Can request Staff Officer assistance 204-888-7961.



mbteach.org

REMINDER

If you have recently changed your name, please contact the LRTA office at 204-929-5782 or seclrta@shaw.ca and have your file updated.

Calendar of Events



LRTA Calendar 2020-2021

September

Wednesday, 2nd
Wednesday, 16th
Wednesday, 23rd

Opening Day
LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Council Meeting

October

Monday, 5th
Wednesday, 7th
Thursday, 15th
Wednesday, 21st
Friday, 23rd

LRTA New Rep Orientation
LRTA Executive Meeting
Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar
LRTA Council Meeting
MTS PD Day

November

Wednesday, 4th
Thursday, 5th
Wednesday, 18th

LRTA Executive Meeting
Pension Sustainability Seminar
LRTA Council Meeting

December

Wednesday, 2nd
Wednesday, 16th
Monday, 21st through
Friday, Jan. 1st

LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Council Meeting
Winter Break

January

Wednesday, 6th
Wednesday, 20th

LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Council Meeting

February

Wednesday, 3rd
Thursday, 4th
Wednesday, 17th

LRTA Executive Meeting
Pre-Retirement Seminar
LRTA Council Meeting

March

Wednesday, 3rd
Wednesday, 17th
Monday, 29th through
Friday, April 2nd

LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Council Meeting
Spring Break

April

Wednesday, 7th
Wednesday, 14th
Thursday, 15th
Wednesday, 21st
Monday, 26th

LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Council Meeting
Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar
LRTA Annual General Assembly
MTS AGM Binder Meeting

May

Wednesday, 5th
Thursday, 6th
Wednesday, 12th through
Saturday, 15th
Wednesday, 19th

LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Appreciation Dinner
MTS AGM
LRTA Council Meeting

June

Wednesday, 2nd
Wednesday, 9th
Wednesday, 16th

LRTA Executive Meeting
LRTA Retirement Reception
LRTA Council Meeting