



President's Message Marcela Cabezas

On Wednesday, May 12th, a fortune cookie spoke to me.

I had neglected to pack a lunch in my haste to get my children off to school. Miraculously, I managed to find a couple of minutes to pick up some comfort food a from local restaurant.



As always, there are a lot of irons in the fire for us at the LRTA office. From the standard springtime calls from members regarding staffing queries or retirement notification procedures to the pandemic-related calls which were only further heightened by the recent Mother's Day announcement by the provincial government to shift to remote learning across the city. That day, we were also preparing ourselves and our delegation for the three-day long MTS AGM set to start on Thursday. As well, we were continuing our work on the Bill 64 battlefield, trying to find ways to assist and engage our membership in raising their voice. And if that were not enough, we were racing the clock to try to move along negotiations with the LRSD Board prior to the passing and proclamation of Bill 45 which threatened to freeze our wages at 2020 levels.

I must admit on that day, it all felt a bit overwhelming. I had shovelled some food into my mouth between phone calls, texts, and emails and was deep in discussions with Scott and Jay on so many pressing matters when I finally got to my "dessert." I cracked open the fortune cookie, paused to read it, and then smiled.

You see, the cookie's message was, "Someone is watching over you right now." It was a timely reminder. While the pandemic strives to keep us apart from friends and loved ones, it was good to be recall that during these extraordinarily overwhelming times we are not journeying alone.

Speaking truth to power can be a scary thing and it might be surprising to learn that confrontation is not my jam. Yet, this was where we were on the negotiations front, seemingly with little hope on the horizon and the clock quickly running down to zero.

The next day at AGM, our delegation was surprised to learn of a Twitter storm organized by MTS on behalf of LRTA, RETTA, and WTA, the three teachers' associations still in

wait of a deal at the time. The show of solidarity from our union siblings as they took to social media in droves to voice their support for us was beyond touching. The hashtag *#fairdealforteachers* would trend in Manitoba for several days straight.

The following morning, on Friday, I was elated to find a one-line email of hope from the LRSD Board chair in my inbox. Not long after that, in a matter of hours, the Association would be sharing with our members and our colleagues across the province that an agreement in committee had been reached between the LRTA and the LRSD. We may never know what shifted the tide. But all I can say is I am filled with gratitude. My thanks to those of you who took a moment out of your overwhelmingly busy lives to write an email or message to our trustees. Thank you to our colleagues from across the province for their support and solidarity. Thank you to MTS staff for advising and supporting us. Thanks to the members of the LRTA Bargaining Committee and Table Team for their time and efforts. And lastly, our deepest gratitude to the trustees for coming to the table to reach a deal that has now been replicated in every school division in Manitoba.

If you are like me, I take great satisfaction in completing a task. It often means that there is now time to refocus energy elsewhere. And as we look ahead, there are still enormous battles ahead of us. The pandemic is not done with us yet. Moreover, Bill 64 will require all the energy we have left to forcefully slam the door on it. There are some that are ready to throw in the towel in the face of these challenges. However, this past week and the fortune cookie have shown me that even when a situation seems hopeless, together we can find a way through the storm to effect change.

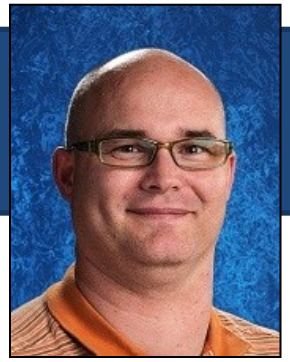
Together we are stronger,

Marcela



Collective Agreement Ratified!

Vice President Bargaining—Scott Wood



On Friday, May 14th, the LRTA and LRSD reached an Agreement in Committee on the renewal of the Collective Agreement. This concluded what has been a lengthy process of bargaining.

The LRSD ratified the agreement on Tuesday, May 18th at a special Board meeting. The LRTA followed this with a ratification vote on Wednesday, May 19th. More than 800 votes were cast on the Agreement in Committee, with an overwhelming 99.5% of voters supporting the new agreement.

Summary of the Agreement:

DURATION: Two (2) Years - July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022

SALARIES & ALLOWANCES: First Day Fall Term 2020: 0.5%
First Day Fall Term 2021: COLA*

**COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) to be determined as follows: In January 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter, when the 12-month (January to December 2021) average annual Manitoba Statistics Canada Consumer Price Index (All Items) change is made known, the increase will be applied retroactively to September 1, 2021.*

ARTICLE 4.07: SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Same increases as teachers at date of signing. No retroactive pay:

For those holding a Valid Teaching Certificate:

Effective Date of Signing: \$194
First day of the Fall Term 2021: \$194+COLA*

For those without a Valid Teaching Certificate:

Effective Date of Signing: \$163
First day of the Fall Term 2021: \$163+COLA*

ARTICLE 5.02: INTEREST ON RETROACTIVE PAY

Waived for this collective agreement.

Additional Points of Clarification:

The increases are applied to all salaries and allowances in the Collective Agreement with the exception of the Personal Professional Development Fund (PPDF).

The Divisional contribution to the PPDF will remain frozen at the 2019 level (\$431 000) for the duration of this agreement.

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MTS AGM Highlights 2021

President — Marcela Cabezas

Virtual AGM Held Again

The 102nd annual general meeting was held Thursday, May 13 – Saturday, May 15th. A robust meeting of 328 delegates was held by virtual means, affording members from across the province the opportunity to discuss and debate resolutions, to pass the MTS budget and set next year's membership fee. Additionally, five members of the Provincial Executive were elected. Twenty-four LRTA delegates represented our Association at the meeting.

This MTS fee for 2021-2022 will increase by \$5.00 to \$1047.00.

Mental Health Workshop to be Offered by MTS

Considering the many challenges faced by members during the pandemic, the Provincial Council assembly approved a timely resolution directing the Society to offer an annual workshop intended for member to explore ideas related to teacher mental health and wellness.

MTS Joins the MFL

The MTS will be joining the Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) on September 1, 2021. The MFL and MTS have a history of working together to support working families, including through the Partnership to Defend Public Service's legal challenge of the Pallister government's unconstitutional wage freeze legislation. This decision to affiliate with the MFL will give MTS a seat at the MFL's Executive Council. MTS join the ranks of groups such as the Manitoba Nurses Union (MNU) and the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) to name a few which are already a part of this key labour organization.

MTS Provincial Executive Elections

There were five positions open for members at large. Delegates participated in an election via Election Buddy, an online election platform. We are pleased to share that the LRTA's own Cynthia Taylor was re-elected to serve a third term on the Provincial Executive. Also re-elected were Sonja Blank, Kent McPherson, and Carla Bouchard. Joining the Provincial Executive this year is Lindsay Brown.

The complete Provincial Executive for 2021-2022 is:

James Bedford, President *Louis Riel Teachers' Association*

Nathan Martindale, Vice-President *Winnipeg Teachers' Association*

Members at Large are:

Sonja Blank *Mountain View Teachers' Association*

Carla Bouchard *Pembina Trails Teachers' Association*

Lindsay Brown *Seven Oaks Teachers' Association*

Chris Darazsi *River East Transcona Teachers' Association*

Kerry Enns *Border Land Teachers' Association*

Kristen Fallis *Winnipeg Teachers' Association*

Catherine Hart *Seven Oaks Teachers' Association*

Kent McPherson *St. James Assiniboia Teachers' Association*

Cathy Pellizzaro *Thompson Teachers' Association*

Joel Swaan *Garden Valley Teachers' Association*

Cynthia Taylor *Louis Riel Teachers' Association*

Bill 64

Vice President Bargaining—Scott Wood

Bill 64 proposes the elimination of democratically elected school boards, the creation of a provincial education authority, school division amalgamations reducing the 37 divisions to 15 “regional catchment areas” plus DSFM, and limiting principals and vice-principals from being in the same bargaining unit of teachers.

One way that members can have their voices heard on this important piece of legislation is to sign up to present to a Legislative Committee during the passage of the bill. In early May, the LRTA hosted an event called “Demystifying Presenting to a Bill Committee” to help members understand this process better. A video of this event can be found at <https://youtu.be/TDTocHclVzU> .

The Manitoba Teachers’ Society has also prepared information about Bill 64 so that members may be better prepared to understand and discuss the implications of this bill on Public Education in Manitoba. This toolkit includes the top issues identified by MTS, Frequently Asked Questions on the bill, and guidance on how to prepare a submission and/or to present to a Legislative Bill Committee. You can access this toolkit at <https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2021/03/24/bill-64-toolkit/> .

Bill 64 has the potential to be a major disrupting force in our public schools. As members, our voices matter on these changes. You are encouraged to **#raiseyourvoice** as a Manitoba educator in opposition to Bill 64.

PROVINCIAL BARGAINING SURVEY

The Manitoba Teachers’ Society is currently undertaking a Provincial Bargaining survey. This survey, open to all members of MTS, will help identify priorities as we move away from local bargaining into provincial bargaining.

This survey replaces the local bargaining survey that the LRTA would typically send to members. The collective bargaining power of the MTS depends on teacher voices being heard. The data gathered from this survey is of paramount importance.

As of Friday, only 4% of LRTA members had responded to the survey. It is our hope that we can replicate the over 90% response rate from LRTA members achieved on the last bargaining survey.

The Provincial Bargaining Survey is open until Monday, June 7th, 2021. For further information and instructions on how to access the Provincial Bargaining Survey, please go to: <https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2021/05/04/the-provincial-bargaining-survey-is-live/>.



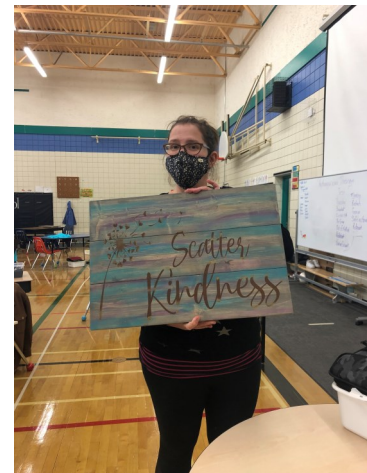
LRTA MEMBER WELLNESS GRANT 2020-2021

Creativity and caring were evident in the events planned by this year's grant recipients. We look forward to opening up the grant application process again next fall. Here are photos from some of the LRTA Member Wellness Events that took place in April.

Member Wellness Event and book selections at École Sage Creek School:



Member Wellness Event at HS Paul:



École Provencher's Member Wellness Event:



How Do the Teachers Feel About Bill 64?

President — Marcela Cabezas

On May 25, the trustees of the Louis Riel School Division held a virtual town “A Community Conversation about Bill 64: The Education Modernization Act.” There were more than 500 attendees.

For those in attendance who were at the beginning stages of learning about Bill 64, there was an outstanding presentation put together by students from Windsor Park Collegiate. These Grade 9 students engaged in an authentic learning process and carefully researched and analyzed Bill 64. Collectively, the students discussed a variety of points of concern regarding Bill 64. They homed in on key concerns that are shared by teachers, parents, trustees, and community members alike providing insightful critique. Beyond examining written texts alone, these students sought out opportunities to speak with journalists and politicians from all parties. While many agreed and made the time to chat with these young people, it speaks volumes that not one of the MLAs from Manitoba’s Progressive Conservative Party agreed to speak with these students who are the children of their constituents and future voters. There are great lessons to be learned from that alone.

An excellent presentation was also given by LRSD parent, Rachel Boone. And as always, an insightful keynote address was provided by Dr. John Wiens.

While I could explore their presentations in greater depth with you, it was one of the questions in the Q and A session that captured my attention.

A parent in the community added a statement to the meeting chat. She said: *“Overall, teachers are fueled by commitment and passion, dedicating above and beyond for their students. How are they feeling about these changes and what has been their venue to expression their feelings and thoughts?”*

I am elated that parents recognize the lengths to which our members have gone this year in service of our students. Our members have been working through the hardest year of their careers, teaching and supporting students through a pandemic. So how do the teachers feel about Bill 64? As the president and spokesperson for the LRTA, representing 1,200 teachers, principals, clinicians, and coordinators, it certainly felt like a question I could have responded to. However, I was acutely aware that were I to have passed the microphone to each one of our 1,200 members, the impact of their unique current lived experiences would have yielded varying responses.

So, what would be the commonalities? It would be fair to say that Bill 64 is overwhelming for teachers. There is enough currently on their plate with teaching in a pandemic and now the move to remote learning. Furthermore, the past few months with no prioritization for vaccination and with test positivity rates soaring in our communities, there were sufficient reminders of our governments’ blatant disregard for our welfare. Dropping a piece of legislation that completely undoes the construct of what is our current public education amid a time of total chaos just further confirms that political agendas are the priority and not the health and wellbeing of those in the education system.

Frustration would be another common descriptor. Teachers and their students alike thrive in stability and routine. Nothing about this school year can be described in such a way. For a government to propose such radical systemic changes to commence next year after the school year we have just had is not just tone deaf, it is callous and heartless.

Circling back to the parent’s question as to how and where teachers are expressing their feelings and thoughts on Bill 64, the magnitude and importance of this question cannot be overstated. Remember, this parent’s question did not ask how LRTA or MTS feels about Bill 64. It asked about the thoughts and feelings of teachers. Our members continue to hold a key position of trust within the community. A Viewpoints Research Poll, commissioned by MTS and conducted in December 2020 confirms that 80 per cent of Manitobans view teachers as the most reliable source of information about education and what is good for students.

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How Do the Teachers Feel About Bill 64? (cont'd)

President — Marcela Cabezas

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Once again, your voice is of critical importance. Consider the many options available to help you raise your voice against Bill 64:

- A lawn sign helps to initiate conversations with your neighbours at an appropriate social distance.
- Amplifying your social media presence on your platforms of choice to share your story with friends and community members.
- Zoom meetings with family and friends to share your concerns and to educate them on the realities of schools today and why Bill 64 is out of touch.
- A letter to your MLA to provide the unique perspective that is needed on what you see each day in your classroom and how Bill 64 will worsen rather than improve the situation. Make sure you send a copy to the education minister as well.
- A letter to the editor to heighten community awareness on Bill 64.
- Submitting a written statement to the Bill 64 Legislative Committee.
- Presenting to the Legislative Committee on Bill 64. It sounds grandiose, but really it is a way to fully exercise your democratic rights. And you literally get to use your voice.

The [MTS Bill 64 Toolkit](#) will provide you with both information and resources to help in your endeavours. Time and again, we have told you that your voice matters. This parent's question confirms that position.

With the limited places and spaces to go to this summer, I hope that each LRTA member can find a few minutes to share their thoughts and feelings on Bill 64 with their community through whichever means possible.

Calendar of Events



LRTA Calendar 2020-2021

June

Wednesday, 2nd

LRTA Executive Meeting

Wednesday, 16th

LRTA Council Meeting

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.

Contact Us

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All matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Call MTS at 204-888-7961 to request assistance from a Staff Officer

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