

SEPTEMBER 2023

# RIELITY CHECK

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOUIS RIEL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION [www.lrta.ca](http://www.lrta.ca)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Jay McGurran**



At the Annual General Assembly on April 19, 2023, I was proud to be acclaimed to the role of President of the Louis Riel Teachers' Association. When I started working in the Louis Riel School Division in 2010, I had no idea that the path would lead me to the place I am now, but I am excited to get started on this unique opportunity. To that sentiment, I hope that you are also excited to embark on the upcoming school year, be it your first year, your tenth year, or possibly your last year.

As we begin anew, there does seem to be a glimmer of hope on the horizon. In high schools, we have returned to seeing students' faces and facilitating in-person classroom discussions. In the middle years, field trips are being planned to bring the learning back to the kids. And, in the early years, students can touch toys again, all while developing relationships with their peers that could last a lifetime. These are all positive developments as we continue to emerge from the shadow of the pandemic.

Having said that, hope is not enough. Working in schools these days is hard. Due to chronic and unsustainable underfunding, Clinician and Student Services resources for our most deserving students are becoming more precious. Principal and classroom teachers are being asked to stretch dollars further than reasonably appropriate. Staffing shortages make it more difficult to fill roles in all areas, especially with respect to Educational Assistants. Add these, and many more variables together, and the result is long days, hard conversations, and difficulty seeing the fruits of our labour. Our working conditions, and subsequently our students' learning conditions, have taken a hit in recent years, which leads me to the single biggest change agent in public education, the upcoming fall election.

In the run up to the election on October 3, 2023, hopeful candidates will knock on your door, call you during dinner, and drop off information about their party's platform. They will inundate you with ads on social, print and visual media. They want your vote at all costs, and as the electorate we are in the position of power to give it to them, but they need to earn it. It is incumbent upon you to be well informed of their position on education, and how their party will seek to address teacher shortages, underfunding and childhood poverty, to name a few. To assist in the process, the Manitoba Teachers' Society has developed an [Election Preparedness Toolkit](#). This document is designed to assist you in formulating questions that will help to narrow candidates' positions on the issues facing our profession. Prior to candidates arriving at your door, review this resource now and share it with your family and friends.

Whether you view yourself as political or not, the reality is that our profession is political. Ultimately, the future of public education will be guided by the politicians who are elected in the fall. Choose one that agrees with your perspective on what is best for students in your care. Choose one that validates your professionalism as an educator. Choose one that will address the issue of inconsistent funding in education. Choose one that respects the diversity of our community and will stand up to those who do not. Choose one that will help to reduce the impacts of child poverty in our classrooms. On October 3, choose PUBLIC EDUCATION!

I know that the next month will be busy, and that you will be stretched in a multitude of directions. Take care of yourself during this transition time and allow yourself to experience things that bring you joy. Your mental and physical wellbeing is the most important factor in ensuring that you will be able to navigate the hurdles of this ten-month marathon. As always, we are available at the LRTA office to assist you in many areas. Please do not hesitate to call 204-929-5782, email at [president@lrta.mbteach.org](mailto:president@lrta.mbteach.org) or check out our website at [www.lrta.ca](http://www.lrta.ca).

All the best for a wonderful year!

Jay McGurran



# VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## *Vice President Professional Development – Jaclyn Porteous*



As the newest member of the LRTA office, I am honoured to work on your behalf this year as the Vice President of Professional Development. Most people recognize me from my 11-year chapter at Hastings School, but this fall I started a new adventure teaching Grade 7/8 at Nordale School in the mornings. My first job in the division was at École Varennes in 2010 where, right away, I saw just how hard working and dedicated the members of the Louis Riel Teachers Association are. It didn't take long for me to get involved with LRTA as a council representative, and my passion for members rights, employee benefits, collective bargaining and professional development has grown ever since. I appreciate my fellow colleagues and friends who have encouraged me to get involved and contributed to my development.

After spending a number of years on the executive and several committees, I am ready and excited for this new challenge! Over the last 5 years, I have worked closely with our Professional Development team as a committee member. During this time, I have often found myself admiring the many years of hard work and dedication that has made our Personal Professional Development Fund as strong and effective as it is today. I am especially proud of how the LRTA has developed one of the strongest funds in the province, empowering each member to actively invest in their self-identified needs. As educators, we know that having choice and voice is important in helping our students be successful, and it is no different for teachers, clinicians, vice-principals and principals. This is something that needs to be encouraged and protected, especially when we head to the polls on October 3rd to vote at the next provincial election. It is important that our elected officials understand just how important autonomous professional development is for educators in Manitoba.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you, and you can always find me at the LRTA office in the afternoons. You can reach me by e-mail at [vp-pd@lrta.mbteach.org](mailto:vp-pd@lrta.mbteach.org) or by phone at 204-929-5782.

Jaclyn Porteous

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# EDUCATION FUNDING: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

## Vice President Collective Bargaining—Scott Wood



The Manitoba government announced a 6.1% funding increase for public schools for 2023-2024, which the Minister characterized as an “astronomical” increase in funding. However, teachers across the province continue to feel the pinch of years of chronic underfunding of the education system. A quick look at the history of education funding in Manitoba may help shed some light on the gap between these two positions.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the total spent on public education for Manitoba was \$2.313 billion. The government funded \$1.445 billion of the cost, or 62.5%. In 2020-2021\*, the total spent was \$2.590 billion with government funding \$1.512 billion, or 58.4%.

From these numbers you can indeed see that the total spent on education grew over the 4-year span. While the government is contributing more total dollars now than they were in the past, if we look more closely at the numbers we will reveal some interesting notes.

The portion of funding allocated by the government continues to shrink. In the data above, the government funding has decreased by 4%, even as actual dollars were increasing. This means an increasing amount of the remaining funding must be sourced by school divisions through other revenues. This includes property taxes, fees charged for services (transportation, facilities use), and tuition (LRATC, International Students). In the past, the simple solution for divisions would be to raise the property tax levels to make up for shortfalls in funding. However, government direction has left divisions with property tax levels frozen at the 2020 levels. This has restricted the ability to generate revenue in school divisions, leaving them reliant on government funding.

As the public is aware, Manitoba has also seen a significant amount of inflation. Taking the 2016-2017 funding and adjusting for the change in Manitoba CPI (consumer price index) of 10.7% to July 2021 would require an additional \$87.5 million just to keep up with the rate of inflation. This does not include inflation since 2021, which is roughly 9.4%.

Since 2021, the government has chosen to rebate education property taxes to rate payers rather than investing the money directly into public education. These funds never had a chance to benefit local school divisions and represent over \$1 billion in funds that could have been invested in the public education system.

So, with a provincial election just around the corner, teachers should be asking prospective candidates about the funding of public education. Some key messages about education funding are:

- 50% of Manitobans say the government is on the wrong track when it comes to providing quality public education.
- The cap on property taxes, with no sustainable replacement, has resulted in a cut to funding.
- Divisions are struggling to meet the needs of students after years of chronic underfunding.
- Inadequate funding has caused the loss of programs, bigger class sizes, and less supports for students.
- Manitobans want an adequately funded public education system.

Some questions to consider asking of candidates:

- What resources and supports do you believe schools should provide to support student well-being and achievement? How will these be funded?
- How will public education be funded with the removal of education property taxes?
- Should education funding reflect the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in Manitoba?
- How will your government provide adequate, stable, and equitable funding to education?

The Provincial Election is scheduled for October 3rd. Now is the time to ask all candidates about funding for public education. All of us—teachers, students, and families—are worth the investment.

\*2020-2021 is the last year that audited statements (FRAME reports) are available from the Manitoba government. Requests for the FRAME reports for 2021-2022 actuals and 2022-2023 budgets have been denied.



## Personal Professional Development Fund

*The objective of the PPDF is to support autonomous personal professional growth and provide financial assistance for as many members as possible. The PPDF is committed to supporting professional growth opportunities that reflect the diverse community in which we teach.*

***Applying for PPDF? Go to  
[www.ppdf.smapply.io](http://www.ppdf.smapply.io)***

### PPDF Allocations for 2023-24

- ✓ Up to \$1000\* for five (5) In-Town Events (In-Town/Online Professional Development or Tuition Fees)
- ✓ Up to \$200\* per 3-credit hour course
- ✓ Up to \$2500\* for one (1) Out-of-Town Event\*\*
- ✓ Up to \$50\* toward MTS PD Day registration (does not count toward In-Town allocation)
- ✓ Substitute cost for approved PPDF applications

\*Subject to available funds

\*\*Conditions apply, see PPDF Guidelines

### Important Reminders

- As a professional courtesy, inform your principal or supervisor before applying
- Applications need to be received at least five (5) days prior to the start of the event
- A detailed and authentic Relevance Statement is essential to support an application
- Funding is not guaranteed and is on a first-come, first-served basis
- Do not make financial commitments until your application is approved
- For Out-of-Town events, be sure to provide a detailed plan of your travel plans.

**See the PPDF Guidelines for all terms and conditions!**

### Contact Us

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### Term Opening Dates

Term	Dates	Opens
1	Sep 5 – Dec 31	September 5
2	Jan 1 – Feb 29	October 15
3	Mar 1 – Apr 30	November 15
4	May 1 – Aug 31	February 15

### Term Closing Dates

Term	Dates	Closes
1	Sep 5 – Dec 31	December 15
2	Jan 1 – Feb 29	February 29
3	Mar 1 – Apr 30	April 30
4	May 1 – Jun 30	June 21

### FAQs

#### ***How do I know which term to apply in?***

The application term corresponds with the opening date of your event, exclusive of travel.

#### ***I've used some In-Town funding this year. Can I use the rest for an Out-of-Town PD?***

No. You cannot use In-Town and Out-of-Town funding in the same year.

#### ***How do I amend or cancel an application?***

Please contact [vp-pd@lrta.mbteach.org](mailto:vp-pd@lrta.mbteach.org) to amend or cancel any application.

#### ***Can I save a draft of an application for submission at a later time?***

Not really. While the new Online System does auto-save unsubmitted applications, application forms can only be accessed once the term opens (see above dates). It is advised to have information ready to copy into the application form when the term opens.

#### ***I keep getting emails from the new system. What's going on?***

The new SMA PPDF system will send a reminder email when you need to do something to an application. This will most likely happen if you have an unsubmitted request in the Application Stage. To stop these reminders, delete any unwanted applications.

On October 3rd, voters throughout Manitoba will participate in the 2023 Provincial Election. LRTA members will have an opportunity to exert influence on which party forms the next government in Manitoba.

Here are some common questions that members raise during these elections.

## **1. Where can I get information about my local candidates?**

Information on all candidates is contained on the Elections Manitoba Website (<https://www.electionsmanitoba.ca/en/Voting/Candidates/43rdGE>).

Candidates who are affiliated with a major political party will also be profiled on their party webpage.

## **2. Where can I get information about what the candidates are promising or what they plan to do for education?**

To find information, it is usually best to go to the party websites for each candidate, as the individual candidates will be presenting information directly from the party. Each party will have a section of their website dedicated to their platforms, including public education.

## **3. What kinds of questions should I ask of candidates?**

Remember, you are the expert about what the needs are in your classroom and in your school. Don't be afraid to ask specific questions about how the candidate plans on supporting public education and share the stories of the challenges you face in the classroom. As always, speak passionately about public education while maintaining the confidentiality of students in your classes.

As a starting point, you may want to engage candidates in their views on: the impacts of poverty on schools; the changing school funding model; how to advance Reconciliation, specifically the TRC Calls to Action 62 and 62; systemic racism and bias in our school institutions.

[The MTS Election Advocacy Toolkit](#) may be of help in preparing questions for candidates.

## **4. Can I publicly support one of the candidates? Am I allowed to help someone I like campaign?**

Yes, you are allowed to be public in your support of a candidate. This includes volunteering on someone's campaign. However, please ensure that your support is not critical of your employer in any way. As long as you speak positively for a person, and not negatively about how other people did the job, you will be able to keep in line with the Code of Professional Practice.





**LRTA**  
LOUIS RIEL  
TEACHERS'  
ASSOCIATION

## LRTA Calendar 2023-2024

### September

Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting  
Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> LRTA New Rep Orientation (virtual)

### October

Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Retreat/Training  
Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> LRTA New Member Celebration  
Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar  
Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting  
Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> MTS PD Day

### November

Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting

### December

Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting  
Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> through Friday, Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> Winter Break

### January

Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting

### February

Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> LRTA Council Meeting

### March

Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting  
Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> through Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> Spring Break

### April

Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting  
Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> LRTA Annual General Assembly  
Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> Maternity/Parental Leave Seminar

### May

Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> LRTA Appreciation Dinner  
Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> through Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> Manitoba Federation of Labour Conference  
Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting  
Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> MTS AGM Binder Meeting  
Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> through Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> MTS AGM

### June

Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> LRTA Executive Meeting  
Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> LRTA Retirement Reception  
Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> LRTA Council Meeting

Reminder: If you have recently changed your name, please contact the LRTA office at 204-929-5782 or [office@lrrta.mbteach.org](mailto:office@lrrta.mbteach.org) and have your file updated.



## 2023 MFL Women's Conference September 26 - 27, 2023, Winnipeg

**Women  
Belong  
In All  
Places  
Where  
Union  
Decisions  
Are  
Being  
Made**



## 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