

The Apple Core

April 2016

Upcoming Events

GVTA Exec meetings for the year at NPC. All meetings start at 4:00pm.

All are welcome:

- May 3
- May 31—General Meeting
- June 7

Manitoba Election Resources

Election day is almost upon us here in Manitoba! Here are some useful links if you would like more information:

Greens: <http://greenparty.mb.ca/>

Liberal: <http://www.manitobaliberals.ca/>

NDP: <http://todaysndp.ca/>

PC: <http://www.pcmanitoba.com/>

MTS: <http://www.mbteach.org/election2016/>

Elections Manitoba: <http://www.electionsmanitoba.ca/en>



Teachers know
our kids need
more support.

REMEMBER TO VOTE ON APRIL 19.



Manitoba Teachers' Society—Union 101

An interview with GVTA president Rick Schroeder

What caused the union to form?

From the Manitoba Teachers' Society Website – mbteach.org...

If only W.E. Marsh could see us now: 14,000 strong after 85 colourful years of fighting for teachers, students and public schools.

HOW...

Marsh was the Belmont teacher who gathered 17 of his colleagues together in the basement gymnasium of the old Normal School on Winnipeg's William Avenue to discuss forming a teachers' organization. It was hot July day in 1918. Marsh and his fellow teachers met over lunch hour to pool their resources and lay the foundation for what was to become the Manitoba Teachers' Federation (MTF). They recognized that teachers' wages, along with those of other workers, were paltry. They also knew they were sowing the seeds for something bigger than themselves.

WHEN...

The following year, on April 22, 1919—at 7:30 p.m. to be precise—hundreds of Manitoba's teachers poured into the concert hall of the Industrial Bureau at Main and Water Streets to organize themselves at their first general meeting. Some outsiders viewed the group suspiciously. As A. J. Struthers recalled: "We were not concerned about the general public—anyway most people had shown themselves massively indifferent to our doings. But some businessmen, certainly some school trustees, regarded this movement as a revolutionary Bolshevik plot to bring on a general strike...."

WHY...

- Herbert Huntley was chosen as the Federation's president and B. Stewart was elected vice-president. The MTF's first big test came in 1922 when nearly 80 of Brandon's public school teachers were dismissed for rejecting a 25 per cent salary cut. As J. C. Wherrett, one of those teachers, noted, "We felt that by taking a stand we had perhaps saved others from such an ordeal." The Federation's lobbying didn't recover the jobs, but the MTF did come to the members' financial aid.*
- Slashed teachers' salaries and indiscriminate firings followed during the Depression. Membership in the MTF fell dramatically during this period as teachers left the profession. However, in 1934, the MTF secured a new teachers' contract which closed the trustees' escape-hatch—the automatic lapsing of contracts.*
- Up to and during World War II, the MTF lobbied for larger school divisions to improve efficiency. In 1942, the MTF became The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) in recognition of its responsibility for teachers' professionalism and ethical conduct.*
- In the 1950s, Manitoba teachers lost the right to strike. In return they gained binding arbitration, due process and a provincial certification board. Baby boomers strained Manitoba's schools throughout the 1960s, and the Society continued its work towards the advancement of public school education.*
- The 1970s saw improvements in the teacher training and certification processes and the MTS tackled the issue of declining school enrollment. Education finance, teachers' rights and mainstreaming were all burning issues during the 1980s.*
- New challenges such as underfunding, unequal access to programs for students, and government-imposed limits on teacher bargaining faced Manitoba teachers in the 1990s.*
- Cuts and freezes to public education are no longer a regular occurrence, but underfunding remains a problem. Restrictions on teacher bargaining have been lifted. But, as always, the Society is looking to the future to improve its members' rights and working conditions.*

What are the union's main values?

Mission

The Manitoba Teachers' Society is dedicated to safeguarding the welfare of teachers, the status of the teaching profession and the cause of public education in Manitoba.

Goals

To provide for its members an organization that will give them an equal, effective and democratic opportunity to pursue their interests and aspirations as teachers.

To achieve for and utilize on behalf of its members a system of collective bargaining that will permit a fair and open negotiation of all economic benefits, professional rights and conditions of work of teachers.

To ensure for its members opportunities to develop their professional skills as teachers.

To protect and defend the individual rights of its members as teachers.

To positively influence educational change.

To be recognized as an effective agent of public education so that government will consult and maintain a continuous dialogue with teachers

Teachers' Bill of Rights

The Teachers' Bill of Rights has been adopted through policy resolutions presented at the Society's Annual General Meetings. While many of its provisions have support in legislation, members are cautioned that it does not have the force of law.

A teacher is entitled to be a member of, participate in the work of, and be represented by the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

A teacher is entitled to teach and be protected under provisions outlined in the collective agreement.

A teacher is entitled to have consultation and due process with respect to all matters relating to contractual relationships.

A teacher is entitled to be directly involved in all professional decisions including the determination of the criteria for performance evaluation.

A teacher is entitled to work in a healthful and safe environment.

A teacher is entitled to maintain a reasonable standard of discipline.

A teacher is entitled to organize learning activities without unwarranted interference - May 2007

What are the main benefits that the union offers?

- *The Manitoba Teachers' Society is the collective bargaining and professional development organization for all of Manitoba's 15,000 public school teachers.*
- *The Society provides assistance to local associations in collective bargaining, offers professional development workshops and lobbies government on legislation that affects education, students and teachers.*
- *As well, MTS provides a range of wellness services including the Disability Benefits Plan and Educator Assistance Program.*
- *It also provides publication services for teacher organizations such as Special Area Groups and publishes the teachers' newsletter, the annual handbook, annual report and an extensive range of brochures and other handbooks.*

How is the union impacted by the change in technology?

We are bound by the laws of the land and technological change along with its benefits, has created some less than desirable challenges. Such as...

- *Concerns over the use/abuse of social media.*
- *Intellectual Property rights.*
- *Personal Privacy and expectations of same.*
- *Confidentiality re: union-member communications.*
- *Costs to operate, update, and tech currency.*
- *Employers rights to employee email, voicemail, GPS info, and surveillance vs. Employees demands for privacy and confidentiality of same.*
- *Difficulty in defining work hours/times.*
- *24/7 accessibility of employers to their employees.*
- *Challenges re: transitioning from a worksite expectation and a telecommuting capability.*

What trends do you see impacting the future of unions?

- *Rhetoric and propaganda that suggests unions as the root causes of problems and not as they truly are – the champion of/for the worker and the primary advocate for social justice.*
- *The capability for governments and employers to erode union abilities to advocate for its members through such well-packaged initiatives and arguably undemocratic policies such as, “Right to Work Legislation” and the “Union Disclosure Bill C-377.”*

What is the public opinion of the union?

In our case, probably negative because our wages and benefits are in the public-domain and directly and negatively affect their pocketbook through the taxes they pay (forgetting too, that teachers pay those very same taxes).

How does the union participate in social responsibility?

That’s easy! In our case, we advocate for our students as well! And... we promote environmental knowledge, sustainable development, inclusion, and social justice – to name but a few.

What trends do you see impacting the future of your union?

Apathy and the ability for some large corporate interests and some governments to create a narrative that diminishes the effectiveness of unions.

We are currently discussing the notions of provincial bargaining amongst our members. While many believe a provincial bargaining plan is the direction that Manitoba Teachers should be heading, we know that in all the other teaching jurisdictions where that has occurred, negotiations have not necessarily benefitted teachers.

FYI, it has only been as of this year that Manitoba Teachers have returned to the same level of purchasing power that they experienced in 1983.