

The Apple Core

May 2017

Upcoming Events

GVTA Executive meetings:

- June 6

Held at NPC and begin at 4:00. All members are welcome

Other Events:

- May 30th—GVTA General Meeting, 4:30 at NPC
- May 25–27th—MTS AGM in Winnipeg
- June 7th—ESJ Book Club, 4:00 at NPC

President's Address

Greetings again, fellow GVTA-ers!

Thanks to everyone who participated in our April GTVA Survey. Your responses will guide the Collective Bargaining and Professional Development committees going forward. There were also lots of questions and feedback for the association, for which we are grateful. As can be expected, it is a delicate balance working for members at opposite ends of their careers, with varying familial, financial, and medical situations, those on permanent, term, and substitute contracts as well as various leaves, and individuals carrying differing philosophical beliefs regarding solidarity and collective rights. We won't ever get it right for everyone, so I appreciate the voice of every member - in agreement or dissent. For those who choose to share their voice, I thank you.

Some of the feedback we received was with regards to GVTA's quarterly liaison meetings with representatives from the board, and the monthly meetings of GVTA's President with the Superintendent of GVSD. A welcome suggestion is to share with members the contents of those meetings. While it would be inappropriate to reveal entire conversations held in confidence, I can endeavor to better share with the membership the nature of these discussions.

Our May 11 Liaison Meeting got off to a late start as the GVTA President arrived shortly after the 7am start time. Thank you to Anny Froese (PDS), Rick Schroeder (NPC), and Sarah (Quickfall) Coates (GVC) for representing teachers at this meeting. Once we commenced, GVTA brought five items to the agenda:

GVSD has an unwritten policy to deduct a full day's wages when teachers send in a sub plan and work from home when schools are open during inclement weather. Our position is that as the employee has provided work to the employer via a sub plan, then the teacher should be paid for the day at sub deduction, rather than the loss of a full day's wage. This would amount to a "break even" point for the division. The current policy provides a financial increase to the division, out of the salary of our members. As there is no formal policy, we sought a discussion around teacher employee concerns in this regard.

Substitute teacher availability is a concern that disproportionately affects the rural schools and is a teacher concern, especially when substitutes are not available and teachers end up covering other classes during their

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contractually negotiated preparation time. We sought to alert the board, as this could be an area of grievable concern. Some permanent-contract teachers erroneously believe that they are not allowed to apply for positions advertised in the first set of job postings for the following year. Through our discussion at the meeting, the division clarified their position that all teachers, regardless of any role they may have accepted in their school, are permitted to apply for any position in the division that they may see as more suitable for themselves in the first round of postings.

As Professional Learning Communities are a division-led initiative, GVTA sought clarity from the board about how individual PLCs are to be formed – do teachers have choice as to which learning community they are in, or are they to be placed in learning communities by a supervisor. We also asked if best practice would have the learning community determine their own research questions, or if research questions can be imposed upon them. We were informed that any of these scenarios may take place within the division, and are acceptable practices to the board.

We made known to the board that we are willing to work in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation to resolve our outstanding grievances on maternity leave top-up filed in October 2016. Arbitration dates have been set for the end of November 2017, but the association believes that there is opportunity for discussion to find a workable solution, as has been done in the majority of divisions across the province and for the majority of teachers. This was taken under advisement.

Later that day, the GVTA President met with the Superintendent. Despite the lack of an official promise, there has been significant buzz about a new school. We discussed the staffing procedure in place for when a new school is announced and subsequently opens, as well as the current plan for catchment changes. On another matter, the association had earlier brought a concern about the division's release date of employee T4s. The answer that came back at this meeting was that the current release date at the end of February is the soonest possible date that the division can have the forms available.

The superintendent took time to praise the teachers of GVSD. He has received much positive feedback from both the Ministry of Education as well as other superintendents with regards to how successful the division has been at raising literacy rates within its Literacy mandate. He expressed that the success that the division has had so far is due to the hard work of teachers, their dedication to the process, and their commitment to the students of GVSD.

I had some trouble finding the proper tone and tenor for two paragraphs, which in the end, I've decided not to publish. In an effort to be transparent with members about the issues we face, they continued to reference GVTA's discussions and working relationship with its employer. I will share with any member the contents of these two paragraphs as I (imperfectly) wrote them, should members be interested. Please e-mail me at <gvtapresident@gmail.com> from your personal e-mail account, and I'll share the text with you. - j.

As usual, this edition of *Apple Core* also contains a summary of our most recent Executive Meeting. There is quite a bit of information in that one page. Please give it a read, and feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss any of these matters further.

Enjoy your final month with your students; may you have plenty of sunshine.

Joel
204-384-5635
gvtapresident@gmail.com

GVTA EXTENDED HEALTH PLAN

More than prescriptions!!!

The GVTA Extended Health Plan helps protect you in a variety of situations. Listed below are the highlights of the coverage it offers.

Please note that the list below is a brief summary. For a complete picture go to the MTS website at mbteach.org. Underneath the Health and Benefits drop down menu, click on the MTS Group Benefits tab. Then follow the appropriate links to our individual association's Extended Health Plan.

Unless other stated, coverage is for 80% of your expenses.

Travel health services for trips less than 90 days as long as you are under the age of 65. (100%)

Ambulance and stretcher service within the province. (100%)

Accommodation for non-local testing or treatment. (100%)

Dental treatment needed due to an accident.

Foot orthotics/Orthopedic shoes.

Hearing aids.

Medical appliances like an iron lung, walker, wheel chair, hospital bed, oxygen equipment, prosthetics, crutches, canes, and other equipment that is prescribed by a physician or physiotherapist.

Services of these paramedics:

physiotherapist/occupational therapist/athletic therapist

audiologist

chiropractor (including x-rays)

clinical psychologist

massage therapist (not a relative)

naturopath

osteopath

podiatrist/certified foot care nurse (combined)

registered dietician

speech therapist

Assisted care/Private duty nursing.

Tutorial services.

Prescription drugs.

Maximums apply to many of the above. As an example, the maximum for the paramedical services is \$850 annually per type of service. Most travel health services have no maximum.

Again, for complete details, see the website referenced above. As well, remember that you have vision and dental coverage! The vision coverage is actually part of our Extended Health Plan.

Dental information can also be accessed via the Manitoba Teachers Society website.

A Message from the President on Bill 28

Colleagues,

On March 20, the Progressive Conservative government introduced Bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society is extremely disappointed to see the government introduce heavy-handed legislation that would bypass the bargaining table and impose 4 years of wage freezes and wage caps for public sector workers - including teachers - well below the cost of living.

This will apply to the thousands of public sector workers, many who already have shown their willingness to be part of the solution, by agreeing - at the bargaining table - to two years of frozen wages.

We know that bargaining is the proven way to find solutions that work for both employers and workers. We'd much rather try to work things out together, by talking and negotiating at the bargaining table.

We have a strong and long history of bargaining fair negotiated settlements with our respective employer groups and this transgression that disrupts this well-established and successful process is shameful.

Bill 28 is further evidence that this government is fixated on balancing the budget at the expense of the public services so many families count on and the people who provide them.

This appalling legislation follows on the government's uninformed dismantling of the cap on K-3 classroom size which was providing a real solution to better learning outcomes for our schools and students. The K-3 Smaller Class Size Initiative resulted in the hiring of 454 new teachers, so its dismantling means that fewer teachers will be working on the front lines in Manitoba classrooms.

Bill 28 At A Glance:

- Bill 28 does not appear to open up existing collective agreements as the four year schedule is not fixed. Therefore Manitoba teachers' wage freeze and cap will take effect July 1st, 2018.
- Bill 28 imposes a four-year wage scale that includes freezes and caps:
YEAR 1: 0
YEAR 2: 0
YEAR 3: 0.75%
YEAR 4: 1%
- Bill 28 does not appear to establish a mechanism to negotiate efficiencies or cooperative gains as an alternative.

We are reviewing this legislation closely and we will provide you with information as it is received.

Norm Gould

2017 MTS Golf Tournament

Presented by the Western Teachers' Association

Join us Saturday, June 10, 2017 at 1:00 pm for our annual golf tournament at the Minnewasta Golf and Country Club, Morden, MB (shotgun start).

\$110/golfer - includes 18 holes, ½ power cart, and dinner

Individual golfers and foursomes welcome. Lots of great prizes available!

Entry deadline is May 27, 2017

First 36 paid teams guaranteed spots.

Make cheques payable to Western Teachers' Association.

Mail entry form to:

WTA, 460 9th Street North, Morden MB, R5H 1B2

For more information:

Email dawnrigaux@hotmail.com or call [204-823-1175](tel:204-823-1175).



Poster and entry form available at link below.

<http://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2017/05/03/annual-golf-tournament/>

GVTA General Meeting

May 30, 2017

4:30 pm

Room 113 @ NPC

Budget! Reports! Vote for Executive! Plus snacks and prizes!



This conference is an annual conference, where the attendees are invested in interpreting law through an education lens. Those in attendance include directors and superintendents of education, lawyers, human resource managers, union leaders and officers, principals, teachers, professors of both law and education faculties, and more.

The first keynote speaker was Judge David Arnot. It was he who first coined the phrase “We are all treaty people.” As a judge in North Battleford, SK, he reached out to the chiefs in the 10 reserves within a short distance of his courthouse when he realized that there was a disproportionate number of indigenous people in his courtroom, and that there must be a better system of justice. He was later seconded as the Treaty Commissioner for the Province of Saskatchewan from 1997-2007. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Racism cited his “Teaching Treaties in the Classroom Project” as a model for Canada. He spoke about his project and his work on human rights specifically with regards to indigenous people. “Education is the key to solving the problem of racial disparity in Canada.”

My first breakout session was “Family Status Accommodation: Where Are We Now?” presented by lawyers Joël Michaud and Ayla Akgungor. They discussed employers’ legal responsibilities in the area discrimination based on family status. Specifically, we heard about the legal cases and precedent for when employers discriminate (or refuse to provide accommodations for) family status. This can include questions such as “what is necessary care” of an employee’s parents or children, what caregivers are responsible to do to demonstrate that they have made all reasonable efforts to provide care, and what an employer’s responsibilities are to accommodate employees, up to the point of undue hardship.

The noon panel was “Human Rights in Education, Successes and Challenges”. The four speakers each took some time to highlight areas of concern within immigration, mental health, francophone issues, and religion with regards to achieving equity and inclusion in education.

After lunch, I attended “Access to Services: The Evolving Role of the School Psychologist”, which dealt with the legal ramifications of student need not being diagnosed soon enough, and the legal responsibilities of schools to diagnose and assess students in a timely manner (which is legislated in the states, but not in Canada). The recommended ratio of School Psychologists to students by the Canadian Psychological Association is 1:500-700. Canada’s national average is 1:2,800.

Following this, I attended “Teaching Culture and Religion: How Educators Can Foster Understanding of Diversity without Imposing Ideologies”. The premise centered around the difference between

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exposure and “indoctrination”. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called for programming on Indigenous cultural and religious practices to promote reconciliation, but many families have concerns about their children performing the spiritual “rites” of another religion. Furthering the problem is that some aspects of Indigenous culture, such as smudging, may be considered religious by some and not by others.

The first keynote on Monday was Chief Darcy Bear, who is in his 7th consecutive term as Chief of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. WDFN has approximately \$100 million in capital investment in the community, and an unemployment rate reduction from 70% to 5%. He is an innovator and businessman who wants the best for his people, and has found ways within the Indian Act to promote prosperity for his people and their land.

My next session, “Student Refugees at the Crossroads in Canada and in Europe – Issues of Culture, Language, Religion, Special Needs and the Duty to Accommodate,” was to be over SKYPE from Ireland, but the technology was not working. As a last minute replacement, I attended “Teacher as the Focal Point of Intersecting Horizons: Technology Use, Student Privacy Concerns, and Privacy Law Compliance – A British Columbia Case Study”. It dealt with BC’s Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and teachers’ obligations for information sharing and storage of student data within protected internet spaces.

Over lunch, we attended a Violent Threat Risk Assessment Panel, which shared with us their successful journey towards a Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol, which includes 19 partnerships including Saskatoon Public Schools, the Ministry of Social Services, Saskatoon Health Region, and Saskatoon Police Service.

After lunch I attended “Freedom of Expression in the Internet Age”, which dealt with both student on-line activity and teachers actions in the public eye, and weighed them against the right of both groups to Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression.

“Reasonable Accommodation: Emerging Issues and Practical Tools for Educators” was next. It discussed making schools safe and welcoming for all students, such as those that want to be excused from certain aspects of the curriculum based on religious beliefs, and meeting the needs of LGBTQ* students.

Tuesday morning brought “Horizons Between Private Behaviour and Teacher Professionalism: Reflecting on British Columbia’s Pivotal Shewan Case 30 Years Later”, which dealt with the standards to which teachers are held in the public eye outside of the workplace, and the laws surrounding those standards.

The final presentation was a Cross Country Legal Round Up Panel, where we heard about the legal cases in education either settled, or that are before the courts this year across Canada.

I appreciate the consideration of Garden Valley Teachers’ Association in covering the costs of this conference. It was highly beneficial, and I would strongly recommend the GVTA President attend this conference in future years.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel J. Swaan



CAPSLE Conference – With the approval of the Executive, the GVTA President had the privilege to attend the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education conference in Saskatoon on April 30-May 2. Please find his written report attached in this edition of *Apple Core*. He would be glad to share additional information with any teachers who would like to know more, based on his summative report. It was an excellent conference, and he recommends that GVTA continue to support it when there is the budget to do so.

RRTVA Horticulture Program – When the closure of the Horticultural program was announced, it set into motion a chain of events that included the GVTA President meeting with the Superintendent to see if the teacher's job could be preserved, as the decision means terminating a permanent contract. Based on that meeting, a meeting of the whole of the board took place to re-evaluate the decision. In the end, the program will still be closing, and one of our members will be without employment in GVSD next year.

GVTA Survey – Thanks to everyone who completed the GVTA Survey in April. The collective bargaining committee analyzed the results and found just over 50 topics were addressed. We will be prioritizing these based on the feedback received, and will bring more specific questions to the membership in a fall survey.

Education Finance – Rick Schroeder (NPC) and Anny Froese (PDS) attended the MTS Regional Education Finance Meeting. The Manitoba budget was the largest discussion topic, particularly the province's cuts to education spending. GVSD should have received a 3% increase in provincial funds for 2017-18 to maintain the current level of spending after inflationary changes are factored in, yet the province only gave the division around one-third of that number.

PD Committee Book Purchases – Due to a remaining balance of funds in the professional development account, the committee looked for ways to benefit as many teachers as possible as they disperse the remaining funds. These funds come from the province to the division who then allocates them to us, the spending of which is determined by a joint GVSD-GVTA committee. This means that the division is accountable back to the province for how they are spent, and the funds must be spent on PD. It was determined that, at this point in the school year, the funds would best be spent on book resources for teachers that could be added to each Teacher Resource section of our school libraries, thus making them available to all members.

Elections – The executive continues to seek nominations for next year. All executive positions are elected annually for one-year terms. There are currently no nominations for Vice President, Education Finance Co-Chair, and Professional Development Co-Chair. Please contact Rick Schroeder (NPC) if you are considering running for a position. If you would like more information as to what being on the executive involves, please contact Rick or Joel. Voting will take place at our **AGM on Tuesday, May 30th at 4:30pm at NPC in Room #113.**

MTS AGM – In April, it was listed that Jacquie Mitchell (SUB) would be representing GVTA at the MTS AGM this year from May 24-27th. She is unable to attend, so as determined by GVTA policy, Mike Urichuk (ECS) will be representing GVTA along with the previously announced delegates.

2017-18 Budget and Fees – At a separate meeting of the executive on May 16th, the executive discussed proposed budget numbers for the 2017-18 academic year. As we have moved our fiscal year-end date from April 30 to August 31, there are some differences in the upcoming budget and some uncertainty regarding financial support from MTS. Typically, MTS will use numbers from a 12-month budget to determine their level of support, but the date change required us to have a 16-month budget, which will be audited as a 12-month year (May 2016 to April 2017) and a 4-month year (May 2017 to August 2017). Despite the uncertainty, and the possibility of us needing to spend around 40% of our reserve funds, we currently believe that we can sustainably do so without raising membership dues or causing hardship to the association. This will need to be voted on by members at our **AGM on Tuesday, May 30th at 4:30pm at NPC in Room #113.**

Next GVTA Executive Meeting – Tuesday, June 6th, 2017 – NPC Room #103 @ 4:15pm; all members welcome.



Garden Valley Teachers Association

MAY - GM

MAY 30 @ 4:30PM

NPC: ROOM 113

SNACKS

BUDGET

PRIZES

ELECTIONS

POLICY RENEWAL



Wednesday, May 8, 2017
Room 255, Legislative Building

My name is Norm Gould and I am the President of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, representing over 15,000 public school teachers from across this province.

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.

I am here tonight on behalf of teachers to denounce the imposition of Bill 28: The Public Sector Sustainability Act. Bill 28 is a betrayal of promises and commitments made by this government, and in particular, by a Premier who claims to have respect for collective bargaining as a former teacher and 'union guy'.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society recognizes that there are fiscal challenges facing this province and that there is a provincial deficit that should be addressed. We even agree with the government's eight-year timeline to return to balance, however we disagree with the assertion that the only way to achieve balance is to legislate wage freezes and cut the services that Manitobans count on and value.

Every day, Manitoba's teachers work with our province's greatest resources, our students. Every student is unique; some speak different languages at home, some are adjusting to a new life in Canada and some have special needs that require them to learn differently. Today's classrooms are more complex than ever and teachers are there on the front lines doing their best to make sure every student develops the tools they need to learn and grow.

What is proposed in Bill 28 is disrespectful to teachers and all Manitobans. Time and time again we have been told that "all hands on deck" are required to deal with the fiscal challenge, but in reality only one sector in Manitoba is being forced to pay the price – the public sector.

Five months ago, I was honoured to be invited to join other public sector unions at a meeting with the Minister of Finance and his officials to strike what was called the Fiscal Working Group. We were optimistic that we would be able to work with government to develop options to improve the government's fiscal situation, but it quickly became clear that the government had no intention of listening to or working with Labour as they refused to provide pertinent information, answer our questions or respond to our recommendations.

I am disappointed that despite their assurances to the contrary, the government has chosen to ignore alternatives to this repressive legislation and instead move forward with getting back to balance on the backs of public sector workers.

During the lifespan of Bill 28, inflation will rise along with the cost of living, thereby eroding the real purchasing power of teachers. Combine the wage freeze with the cut to education funding and it is clear that over the coming years, our teachers and students will be forced to do more with less.

Based on the current number of Manitobans working as teachers, over the next four-years, teachers will have contributed \$217.5 million in lost income to the Minister of Finance.

By coincidence, or by slight of hand, while Manitoba teachers forego purchasing power totalling \$217.5 million dollars over four-years, the government will have added into its rainy-day account, also known as The Fiscal Stabilization Fund, \$225 million dollars over the same four-year window.

In his analysis of the 2017/2018 budget, renowned economist and former Dean of the Asper School of Business Michael Bennaroch expressed surprise at the government's decision to increase its contributions to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to grow the fund from \$115 million to \$225 million by 2019/2020.

The intent of this fund is to balance the government's borrowing requirements over time by growing the fund during times of surpluses and minimizing its contributions during times of deficits in order to lessen the requirement for external borrowing during difficult fiscal times, as we are told we are currently experiencing.

By borrowing \$110 million today to contribute to its rainy-day fund, the government is contradicting its own objectives to balance the budget because instead of reducing the deficit, they are actually adding to it.

I agree with his recommendation that instead of contributing to the fund, the government should be drawing from the fund by \$15 to \$20 million per year for the next five years. Then, once the province returns to balance, the government can revisit its contributions and begin injecting money into the fund.

In the end, Bill 28 disproportionately places the burden of budget cuts on public servants and consequently affects the quality of the services they provide. We do not doubt that salaries are a significant component of government expenditures, but it is important to highlight that government services and programs benefit all Manitobans.

As is the case with other public sector unions, The Manitoba Teachers' Society remains committed to working with the Manitoba government to address these fiscal challenges in an authentic, meaningful way.

But, sadly, if the last 5 months are any indication, commitments to work with labour on the part of this government are nothing more than lip-service and false platitudes.

I have sat at those meetings with the government officials.

We tried to provide alternative options and strategies for this government to help them return to balance within eight years.

Labour committed to work collaboratively with the government and to work in good faith at the bargaining table to seek solutions with our employers.

Unfortunately, our proposals and openness to work with the government were repeatedly dismissed. So now here we are collectively urging you to defeat this bill so that we can try to find a solution that is based on collaboration and good faith and not on division and confrontation.

Since 1947, Manitoba's teachers have worked with our employers, the school boards, to bargain in good faith to seek solutions and reach compromises at the bargaining table without confrontation. This is the case because our right to strike was supplanted with interest arbitration. The foundation of this model is based on equity and equality at the bargaining table and it is a model that has worked for teachers and school boards.

But most importantly it has worked for our students and their families as unlike other provinces, we have enjoyed labour peace which means our students have not had their educational paths disrupted.

This is an excellent example of how Labour and government can work together to reach a solution that benefits everyone. So, on behalf of Manitoba's 15,000 teachers, I call on you to defeat Bill 28 and trust that all Manitobans want to work together for the betterment of this province.



President,

The Manitoba Teachers' Society