

Good evening, members. My name is Joel Swaan, and I'm seeking your support as I run for re-election to the provincial executive. I'm humbled that the members of Garden Valley Teachers' Association have nominated me for this honour.

When people ask why I do this work, my answer has always been with the highest respect for members. I do this work – as a school rep, as a bargaining chair, as a local president, and now on the provincial executive including my work as chair of the first provincial collective bargaining committee which had our first ever provincial opening package ratified by members in March – I do this work, so that teachers who got into education because they love teaching could do so, without worrying about what lies behind the curtain. In the classroom or when performing their duties – whatever they are - members need to be able to focus on their students, their curricula, any of their duties, knowing that someone has their back. They need to be able to teach unencumbered because they aren't worried about their benefit plans, or family medical days, or salary schedule. They should be able to teach without worry, knowing that *not only* is help just a phone call away, but also that they *have* that phone number and they know and trust the person on the other end. That's what I hope to accomplish with my service. To benefit Manitoban students with teachers, clinicians, principals, and vice-principals who have their attention because our members know that there are capable, supportive, dedicated people like us working and advocating for them.

Over the last 19 years of service to members, here are three things I've learned - 1) that I've been able to approach my work with an extraordinary amount of privilege and that I mustn't take that privilege for granted, 2) that it is imperative that the voices at the table *respect* the diversity of our members until such time as the voices at the table *reflect* the diversity of our members, and finally 3) that there is strength in Unity, but that unity doesn't need to come at the loss of individuality – a rainbow is one thing, but it is also made up of many things. Its beauty is in how the sum of the parts make up the whole.

So, I don't have a big spiel around the state of education in the province and how I'm the only person who can fix them. I'm honoured to be here with my esteemed colleagues, and I think each of them would bring different strengths to the table. I can't tell you that I alone am the solution to problems in education in Manitoba, but I am committed to the membership and the ideals of the Society, I'm a strong advocate, and I lead through service. I'm seeking your support for the opportunity to do so. Thank you, Merci, Miigwetch.