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President's Message

Manitoba's premier Brian Pallister recently stated he needs "all hands on deck" to deal with the province's finances. Presumably, as part of this strategy, the premier has invited union leaders to discuss their support in this endeavour. Former Education Minister, James Allum, responded saying Pallister is "inviting all hands on deck so that he can throw everybody overboard." Nautical analogies aside, this all started with one sentence from the throne speech: "Legislation will be introduced, following consultation and dialogue, to ensure that the province's public sector costs do not exceed Manitobans' ability to sustain the services they receive in return." Given Pallister's invitation, we are now in the consultation phase, after which will come the legislation. David Camfield, associate professor of labour studies and sociology at the University of Manitoba, was quoted by CBC reporter, Steve Lamberts, as saying: "Probably what lawyers have told [Pallister] ... is that if they were just to simply impose legislation, there's a very good chance that the court would strike it down, but if they go through some kind of consultation, don't get the results they like and then pass legislation, they'll be more likely to be able to survive the court challenge." I tend to be more optimistic. I have always believed that true dialog and discussion are always preferable to confrontation and unilateral action; let us hope the premier is like minded and truly wants to hear what unions have to say. Back home in the Interlake, I know that is the way it frequently works. The Interlake Teachers' Association regularly engages in liaison meetings with the board and the senior administration personnel consistently make themselves available to talk with ITA representatives when there is a concern. The ISD board and senior administration are composed of people with positive intentions who wish to do the best for our schools and our students. Sometimes the ITA vision of what that looks like is different from theirs, sometimes it is the same, but only rarely have I felt we could not talk about it.

The ITA Needs You

In an example of employer-worker cooperation, the Interlake School Division has entered into an agreement with all four unions, including the ITA, to establish a divisional workplace safety and health committee. This new committee will deal with the physical safety of our workplaces as well as incidents of violence and harassment. Members of the committee will receive annual training and become active in the inspection of our buildings and workplaces. The ITA has been given a number of places on the committee so we must be sure to

fill them. If you would like to contribute to the welfare of your co-workers in this way, please let me know. Your involvement would not require any extra-curricular time, but would take you away from your regular duties for six school days in the year.



Christian Science Monitor – creative commons

Safe and Inclusive Spaces

By now, many of you are aware of the MTS campaign to distribute poster cards to teachers wishing to declare their classrooms safe and inclusive spaces. We want students regardless of gender or sexual identity to feel safe in our classrooms, and this card is one way of communicating that to everyone who enters our rooms. Equally, I believe all students regardless of social or academic ability, ethnic or cultural origin, or gender identity or sexual orientation, should feel safe in our classrooms and should know that their teacher wishes them to feel safe. There are many ways to communicate this to students, these cards are just one. Placing a card in your classroom is voluntary, and not placing a card in your classroom is voluntary. The card also communicates that you are open to talking with your students about these issues. Your ITA School Representative can provide you with a poster card, should you wish to display one in your classroom.



WELCOM Welcomes Your Input (from MTS)

An exciting initiative was launched at The Manitoba Teachers' Society Annual General Meeting in May: the Women in Education Leadership Commission (WELCOM) was established to examine the fact that women are under-represented in education leadership roles in our schools, our union, and in the community. In Manitoba, roughly seventy percent of teachers are female, yet that number is not reflected in the percentage of women in leadership roles. WELCOM is an arms-length body distinct and separate from the MTS Provincial Executive whose mandate is to seek input from women educators across Manitoba and develop recommendations aimed to enhance the participation of women in all aspects of educational leadership. The Commission is composed of Chairperson Carmen Rohne (LSTA), Marcela Cabezas (LRTA), and Jennifer Schlag (RETTA). The coming months will be busy as the Commission will be reaching out for input from female MTS members in a variety of ways including a Telephone Town-hall tentatively scheduled for late-February and a series of in-person focus groups in communities all across Manitoba. The Commission will provide safe and secure opportunities for women members of the Society to discuss their experiences, aspirations, successes, and barriers to assuming and pursuing leadership roles in their schools, school divisions, local associations, and MTS and to promote awareness about the roles of women within educational settings. WELCOM looks forward to hearing from you. Dates for the Telephone Town-hall and focus groups will be announced soon. In the meantime, for general enquiries or to get in touch with one of the Commissioners, please send an email to WELCOMission@gmail.com.

Ed. Note: Including all schools, lead teachers, co-ordinators, and the superintendent's department, 67% of the educational leadership positions in the Interlake School Division are held by women; the ITA Executive is 64% female; and the ISD board is comprised of 6 women and 3 men.