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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: WELCOME BACK AND WELCOME ABOARD, NEW COLLEAGUES.

As the 2021-22 school year begins, some facts are clear. We are still in a pandemic, but this time around we have data, science, experience and supports in place to help us navigate. BILL 64 = busted, door slammed, however you want to frame it. Thank you for your advocacy, investment and passion. The result; a hard stop on an issue by a government who learned you can't mess with communities, their kids or their schools.

The new year also arrived with many uncertainties. What direction will education reform in Manitoba now take if any? How many times will the on-going pandemic change the game plan? How are our students fairing and what are the next steps?

With some of these issues left dangling, where do we focus our energy? My suggestion... the same places as always.

Yourself: Do things that fill your bucket, add to your strengths and talents in teaching, but that don't drain the bucket of energy. As the saying goes, you can't be ALL THINGS, to ALL PEOPLE, and you certainly can't when you aren't YOUR ALL.

Read your room: Work with your students to determine where you both are now, mentally and academically. Be willing to start from wherever that is and ask for support along the way. Don't think of early assessment results as how far behind your kids are, but rather as valuable info to help you set a plan in motion. Reach out to your Principal if you need things, your colleagues if you need ideas, and parents as you need support from home.

"I don't have ducks or even a row... I have squirrels, and they are everywhere."

There is no set start or finish line, and there may not be for a while. What is crucial is we are back where we can do what we do best, and that we continue to make progress as safely as possible. It's a chance to think beyond curricula, to teach people and not stuff, and to be the best squirrel trainers we can be.

Bill 64 & the BEST Strategy:

A halt to BILL 64 means uncertainty for education reform in Manitoba. MTS has been that once a new Premier has been chosen, they re-examine government priorities, including Education. Until then, MB Education will continue the work of committees as outlined in the BEST (Better Education Starts Today) document – [LINK](#). Click [HERE](#) to see a list of some of the task forces and their members, including:

- Parent Engagement Task Force
- Teachers' Idea Fund Review Panel
- Student Advisory Council
- Curriculum Advisory Panel
- Minister's Advisory Council on Inclusive Education
- Task Force on Poverty and Education
- Indigenous Inclusion Directorate Advisory Council
- Attendance Task Force.

It is important to note, that the BEST doc, BILL 64 and the Report on the K-12 Education Review – [LINK](#), were 3 separate entities. The demise of the Bill in its original form does not set the whole project back to the drawing board. MTS has had substantial and fruitful conversations with MB Ed, MTS staff will have representation on a variety of the committees, and MB Ed has committed to looking back at the K-12 Review Report as they set the path forward.

New MTS TV Ad Campaign:

MTS ear-marked funds in May for what was expected to be a long battle against Bill 64, and they had just launched [THIS TV AD](#). The Society PR strategy has now shifted to outlining what changes the system does need, putting focus back on their 17 recommendations to the K-12 Commission [LINK](#). Stay tuned for future TV ads and look for the next PR campaign on Twitter @InterlakeTA, or MTS @mbteacher, or follow MTS on Facebook or Instagram.

Bargaining:

- Our local ITA/ISD Collective Agreement is set to expire June 30, 2022, after which we follow the existing CA until a new one is reached. Members won't see an increase in pay this fall, as the fourth-year increase (Sept 2021-June 2022) will be determined by the 2021 COLA. This calculation is not done until January of the subsequent year. Back pay will follow thereafter.
- The MTS Provincial Bargaining Protocol ([LINK](#)) has been enacted based on the passage of Bill 45. This means the Society has begun working toward developing the first ever, province-wide opening package and bargaining on behalf of all members (except DSFM). Regional priorities were collected from locals in June 2021. Provincial Seminar 1 is scheduled for October 1 & 2 where the 5-member Provincial Bargaining Committee will be elected. After Seminar 2 in March 2022, the hope is to begin bargaining with the province.
- Bill 45 received Royal Assent on May 20, 2021 but requires proclamation to be in effect. With the recent developments regarding Bill 64, we continue to await details of any timeline.

Benefits:

A couple of important items of note:

- Effective October 1, 2021, the Group Life rate is increasing by \$0.01 per \$1000 of coverage. If a member earns \$85,000, they will pay \$0.85/month more, (before taxes). If you are insured for 2x earnings, it would be 2x accordingly, etc.
- **Need to change your coverage?** When eligible life events occur, **you have 90 days before or after the life event to make changes to your coverage**. Eligible life events include:
 - Legal or common-law marriage.
 - Loss of spousal coverage.
 - Divorce or termination of common-law marriage.
 - Death of spouse.
 - Birth or adoption of **first** child.
- **NEW FOR 2022:** Effective January 1, 2022, Health Plan coverage will expand to include **Flash & Continuous Glucose Monitoring**. There will be no increases to Health rates.
- **Changes to Dental:** Rates are normally renewed every September. Upon review of our dental plan, we have an accumulated surplus of 108%. This means the plan is in great shape, and a 15% decrease to current Dental rates will occur. However, since we have yet to receive another salary increase for 2021/22, a final rate will not be calculated until January 2022, and rates will apply retroactively to September 2021. More to come in October.
- Please see the Sept 2021 Benefits Newsletter in CIMS [HERE](#), for more details.

Divisional Items:

MB Gov has provided 2 types of extra funding to schools this year, on top of their budget.

- **Per Pupil:** ISD received \$600K in per pupil funding for Covid related costs such as extra staff, cleaning, safety and employee rapid testing. Divisions can request more as needed.
- **Recovery Learning:** ISD received \$75K, topped it up to \$100K. Will go directly to schools.

Employee Vaccination Status Collection: Employees had until September 21st, to voluntarily share their vaccination status with their direct supervisor. This was done solely so that ISD could determine the approximate number of tests and cost in order to adhere to current public health orders. “Persons who have direct and ongoing or prolonged contact with pupils at a public or independent school”, must **either** be **fully-vaccinated** **or** **undergo regular testing** as outlined by their administrator. ISD will inform its employees of the final testing plan when it is finalized. You can view the order [HERE](#).

The definition of a school outbreak, close contact and self-isolation requirements have also changed. See all this info in the MB Toolkit for Notifications of Cases in Schools - [LINK](#). Members are encouraged to stay informed. Please share questions with your Principal. You can reach out to me, Cathy Pleskach, at president@interlaketeachers.ca, or connect with Teacher Welfare Staff at MTS.

Equity & Social Justice/Indigenous Voice & Action:

September 30th marks the **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**, or **Orange Shirt Day**. ITA and IANTE were happy to collaborate to ensure all members received orange shirts. Thank you to IANTE for working on this with us in honouring survivors and uniting for our students to see. Please let me know if you did not receive your shirt. Cora-Leigh Mazurat from New Haven School (cmazurat@isd21.mb.ca), is your IVA chair and has many resources to share. She is also willing to do blanket exercises with schools.

In August, five of your ITA executive attended the virtual MTS Summer Seminar over 3 days. They were trained in governance and their legal responsibility to you. We heard many speakers, including Gina McKay. She shared:

“The most important thing I’ve learned about equity is that it is not for me to say to people of any race other than my own, that I can relate or I know what they are going through. All I can say is, ‘I’m sorry that happened to you’, and then listen to how I can never make them feel that way again. When asked why we support Orange Shirt day, there’s no greater reason other than we simply support our indigenous colleagues and students.”

Further, it is the MTS position that this is an important opportunity for us to acknowledge the role we have of listening, learning and supporting the work of Reconciliation. We have a responsibility as educators, to continue this work and take the obligation seriously. Our efforts to support teachers in this work will ensure they can be there to support their students, families and communities.

Professional Development & Support:

Did you know the Teacher Portal at www.isd21.mb.ca is filled with resources? So is the Manitoba Remote Learning Centre – [LINK](#). Professional Development may be limited by Covid, but doesn’t just have to happen on PD days. You have access to people also! John Bock (jboc@isd21.mb.ca) – Curriculum Support; Lori-Anne Busch (lbusch@isd21.mb.ca) – Literacy Support; and Christine Michalyshen (cmichalyshe@isd21.mb.ca) – Numeracy Support, are all just a click away.

NEW TEACHERS: MTS has many New Teacher Resources and tools online. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about your benefits, obligations to your colleagues and students, and more details of what your union can do for you.

FAB 5 Conference: If you are a Teacher in your first 5 years, this is an excellent event – [LINK](#)

MTS PD DAY, October 22, 2021: Register [HERE](#)

PR Events & Polls:

Look for upcoming events to be announced, school visits by members of your ITA Executive, as well as member polls both from ITA and MTS in the coming months. As the world cautiously opens up, we hope to bring back opportunities to get together. We also want to know what your priorities are and what we can do for members of the Interlake Teachers’ Association. We hope you have a great year!

CONTACT:

- School-based, schedule or workplace safety concerns should go to your direct supervisor/Principal first.
- Further questions or concerns regarding teacher welfare, safety, and how to navigate your union can be sent to President, Cathy Pleskach, at president@interlaketeachers.ca, or call/text (204) 792-8406. Responses can usually be expected within 24 hours.
- If you have questions or concerns in a specific area, and wish to speak to one of the executive chairs, you can connect with them via our website [HERE](#), or go to www.interlaketeachers.ca.