

President's Message - Dean Elliott

I trust that you all had a restful and relaxing Christmas Break. The weather certainly seemed to be cooperative. At the time of reading this message all of you will have been back at school for over a month as a busy year continues.

You should soon receive the FTA Safety survey in the mail. This survey was created a number of years by the executive to determine how safe our members feel in their communities, homes and schools. The information we gather is shared with the Division with a look to improving the situation. The last time the survey was done, deadbolts and extra security were hired for some communities. You will notice that your survey is numbered. This is to ensure that we know what community the survey was from. It is pointless to know there is a crisis situation somewhere in the Division without knowing where. The numbers are specific to the community, not to the individual, so everyone in the same community will get a survey with the same number. Please fill it out as soon as possible and send it to Edie Turner for analysis.

Another survey that you will have received by now is from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. MTS wants to gather information on teacher workload to be able to lobby on our behalf with the Province. Another benefit to local associations like the FTA is that we will have access to our own association data. This might be useful to us if we end up in a situation

of binding arbitration. In order to do this survey you will need your MTS number located in the bottom left of the MTS member card you received in the mail this Fall. If you have lost your card there is a way you can get the number from the website. You will need to put that number on the survey to ensure its authenticity. Only the completed surveys with a number will be counted in the survey.

It is my hope that we will get 80% of our teachers taking the workload survey. In that way the information can be useful at the bargaining table. If a low percentage of our teachers do the survey then its relevance and accuracy is reduced. Please do the paper survey and send to:

Dean Elliott
P.O. Box 751
Snow Lake, MB
R0B 1M0

I will then send the completed surveys on to MTS. Frontier has decided to do the survey on paper rather than on-line because in many of our communities the only high-speed hook up is at school and MTS does not want us using our employers equipment for this survey.

If you are approaching the magic retirement age of 55 there is some information on the TRAF website (www.traf.mb.ca) that might interest you. Go to their website and click on "NEARING RETIREMENT" at the

bottom of the screen, then click on the 2006-2007 Pre-retirement Seminar button, and you will be able to hear the same presentation you would get if you went to one of the TRAF retirement seminars. Given the geography of our Division, I think this is a great way to get the information we need to make good retirement decisions.

All schools should have also received copies of the seniority list for each worksite. Please ensure that you check the information to ensure it is accurate. We have already found some discrepancies and have had Human Resources in Winnipeg fix these problems. If you do find a problem please email me with as much information about the problem as you can and I will pass the information on to Winnipeg.

It looks like we will have a MTS Presidential election this Spring. Contact people at each work site will act as returning officers for your work sites. The last time we had a presidential election, many Frontier members did not vote. I am hopeful that we will have an excellent turnout for that election. You can watch for further information on that coming your way soon.

Should you have any questions or concerns about these or any other matters please do not hesitate to contact your executive members. The contact information is always on the last page of this publication.

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Nomination Forms for the FTA Elections are on Page 7!!

“Consistency Between Employee Groups?”

By Wendell Head



Wendell Head
FTA Vice-President

In April 2006, Frontier School Division revised Policy GML to read that “In order to provide consistency between employee groups across the Division, the Board is implementing a one-day paid personal day for non-unionized support staff.”

I had to read this a couple of times to believe what it said. I even had to go to the Division website to double-check the policy to ensure I had the correct version. Sure enough, it would appear that the Division wishes to “provide consistency between employee groups.” And according to this policy, the first employee group to benefit from this newfound sentiment is the non-unionized support staff, who for the sake of consistency, now also get a paid personal day. In other words, the Division acknowledged that

unionized employees (a.k.a. teachers) get a paid personal day, so everyone else should too.

Wow! This of course begs the question - is the Division going to be more consistent on other policies as well?

For example, non-unionized support staff currently get two paid travel days per year, WITH pay, that can be taken alongside major holidays such as Christmas or summer holidays. They actually get TRAVEL days (not to be confused with co-curricular or personal days) to get a head start on their vacations. This is very inconsistent with the ZERO travel days that teachers get.

Are there other such glaring inconsistencies in policy? Well, a quick glance at the Policy Manual reveals that indeed there

are. Take compassionate leave, for instance. Non-unionized support staff can get up to 5 days compassionate leave in the event of the death of an aunt or uncle. Teachers get ZERO. Non-unionized employees get a week-day off for Remembrance Day, no matter what day it actually falls on, or they get paid overtime. Teachers only get a weekday off if it falls on a weekday. There are very likely many other inconsistencies as well (I haven’t even looked at Remoteness Allowance yet).

So is the Division serious about trying “to provide consistency between employee groups”? If so, there are obviously more revisions to be done. Meanwhile, we can only hope that teachers will also benefit from some of these revisions—not just the support staff.

Support staff get travel days, compassionate leave for aunts & uncles, Remembrance Day....

Teachers DON'T!

Collective Bargaining Update

By Scott Miller

Another weekend of negotiations has come and gone, after many hours of frank and sometimes very honest discussion with the board (Frontier School Division Board of Negotiations) and the committee (Frontier Teachers' Association Negotiations Committee). Both groups took a break for the Christmas Holidays, and met again on January 12th and 13th 2007.

Most people would be confused with how few articles the board and the committee have agreed to at this point in the proceedings. Of course the agreed articles and the articles under discussion cannot be discussed in an open forum like this newsletter. Let me assure teachers, however, that your interests are being protected. This is one reason for the slow progress of the Negotiations Committee – we want to make sure that we agree to nothing that could hurt or harm our teachers in any way. Also, teachers must receive the increases and advancement in areas that we require.

At our most recent meeting, more progress was made, but it continues to be slow. Frank talk and honest discussion are good

but they tend to slow down the proceedings. This is not a bad thing. On the contrary, I would say it is a good thing, as we get a chance to discuss and scrutinize every article before we agree to any change in the collective agreement.

Major areas of discussion are isolation, salary grid, number of sick days and other leave days. There are some other minor issues still on the table along with other allowances but the major ones will cause us a great deal of discussion and pains before any kind of agreement is reached. For those of you waiting or wanting your back pay, do not hope for this “windfall” before June of 2007.

If there are any new developments over the next while I will be sure to keep you informed of all future proceedings. Just an interesting fact, the surveys that are passed to the membership about what the teachers of Frontier would like to see in their collective agreement are sent out by mail, fax and the newsletter. They are also done and completed a year in advance of negotiations, this way what teachers want can be placed in the collective agreement or

more to the point these ideas can become proposals for the association to give to the board for the next collective agreement. Thus teachers new to Frontier would not have received any surveys because they would have been completed in advance of their arrival into the Frontier community. For any of the long term members that do not remember the surveys please watch for the new one after a new collective agreement is signed.

For those teachers in the division still doing “Lunch Duty” thanks a great deal for making my job even more difficult than it is. You know it’s hard enough trying to make arguments for more pay and less duty when we still have teachers that do their own thing. Five hundred teachers negotiating their



Scott Miller
Collective Bargaining Chair

own individual contracts will only get half of what we can negotiate as a group! This is fact – not fantasy. Therefore, please remember “united we stand, divided we fall.” Or remember the slogan of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 – “Solidarity Forever.” This phrase also set Poland free from years of Soviet oppression. History always has a story to tell if you are willing to listen.

CBA Negotiations Committee Includes:

Scott Miller
Erin Williams

Heather Paul
Michael Ferchuk

Seniority List Information

It is interesting that with the publication of the seniority list that there has been so much confusion over it. I thank all those people that have contacted me via e-mail and telephone. I have passed on your concerns to the human resources staff for corrections. However, there does seem to be some confusion about seniority as a teacher and length of service with the Division.

A number of people have contacted me because they worked as an

EA in Frontier and then became a teacher. Do these years count? The answer is no. The Seniority list pertains only to the time you have held a teaching permit and were working as a teacher in Frontier. Those of you that came through the PENT program and worked with the Division are in the same situation. Your service with the Division as a PENT student, while certainly applicable for long-service awards, does not qualify as seniority as a teacher.

Classroom Chuckle

In an attempt to quickly get his students' attention, a World Issues teacher began his lesson on the environment by clapping. Every few seconds, he clapped his hands quite loudly. Sure enough, as the students came in, they immediately sat and looked at their teacher, mystified. Once he knew he had the

kids hooked, the teacher said "Every time I clap my hands, another barrel of oil is poured into our oceans, a hectare of rain-forest is lost forever, and another species comes closer to extinction." Before he could continue, a student yelled from the back of the room - "Then stop clapping your hands!"

Have a funny story about teaching? Send your story to whead@frontierteachers.ca and it might get printed in The Voice!!

School Computers & Email - Don't Be Stupid!!

By Wendell Head

Did you know that your employer can monitor your email messages? Did you know that they can even monitor your messages from web-based email accounts such as hotmail and yahoo if you access them from a school computer? And did you know that it is NOT against the law for them to do so?

Your emails are not private. For that matter, nothing you do on a school computer is private (not in the legal sense of the word anyways). Whether you are sending emails to family and friends, typing up personal letters, or accessing gambling websites, everything you do on a school computer can be tracked and monitored. More importantly, you can be disciplined for inappropriate use of school computers.

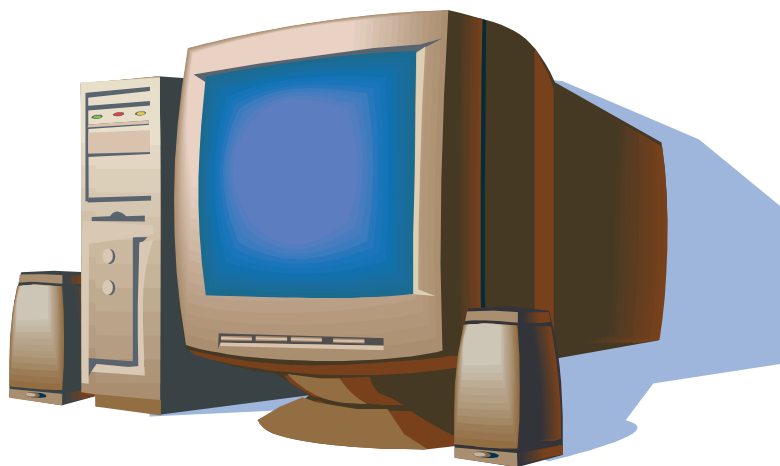
What does MTS have to say about this? Their Ad Hoc Committee on Technology argues that as long as teachers do not use school computers "in any way that is ille-

gal, interferes with the work of the school or division, or would tend to discredit the school or division, he or she should be safe from disciplinary action." Having said that, of course, the Committee does offer the following advice - "Don't be stupid!"

For example, don't use school computers to view or send erotic or sexually explicit material - that would be stupid. Don't use school

computers to send emails with statements about colleagues that are defamatory - that would be stupid. Don't use school computers to access gambling sites - that would also be stupid. There are lots of examples, but you get the picture.

If you would like more information on this, go to the MTS website at www.mbteach.org/computeruse.htm to read the article "Don't get bitten by your mouse."



Teacher Spotlight - Jeff Osinski (HBOIERC, Norway House)

Jeff Osinski has been around. In his thirteen years as an educator, he has been in a number of roles, including Science Teacher, Principal, Vice-Principal, and Media Literacy Teacher.

It is his current role as the Information and Media Technology Teacher at HBOIERC, however, that he has come to enjoy the most. The reason, he claims, is that it gives him the “most interaction with kids in a creative sense.” And when he explains what his students are doing, it isn’t hard to understand what he’s talking about. In this position, he has guided students through projects in film-making, cartooning, animation, desktop publishing, digital imaging, and even

the occasional activity in rocket science!

Of them all, he gets the most satisfaction from the film-making components of student learning. This isn’t surprising, considering some of his students have won awards for the videos they have produced. In his own words, “It really brings out the creative side of students. No two days are ever the same—ever! It’s amazing what students will come up with when you give them the basic skills and tools they need to get going. They get a chance to develop a fun project that they’re actually excited about and have a lot of pride in. And when students combine fun, excitement and



pride at school, success is often the result.”

Sounds like a dream job, but don’t kid yourself—the rewards of this job are not accidental! They are a direct result of all the planning, preparation, and time that Jeff puts in. Facilitating student projects with the latest technology usually means Jeff has more homework than any of his students. It also means staying after school four days a week to help students use the equipment they simply don’t have at home.

And when he’s not helping students, Jeff is usually found helping other teachers in the school with integrating information and media technology into curriculum. In fact, as Chair of the school’s Technology Committee, he takes a leadership role in organizing and often running after-school Technology PD sessions for other teachers.

Jeff comes to school every day with excitement. He has fun with his students and other teachers, and takes pride in his work. Success is the result!!

“When students combine fun, excitement and pride at school, success is often the result.”

- Jeff Osinski

PUT A TEACHER YOU KNOW IN THE SPOTLIGHT!!

Is there a teacher at your school who you think should be in the spotlight? Do you know someone who goes that extra mile for the students, who volunteers to help with events, who stays after school to work with students, who exemplifies what we regard as a great teacher?

If so, nominate them for the “Teacher Spotlight!!”

Give them the recognition they deserve, and the FTA will give them a gift certificate valued at \$100!!

***** Here’s how *****

Send the teacher’s name and school to Wendell Head, along with a brief explanation of why you think this teacher should be in the “Spotlight.”

Important Notice About FTA Elections!

To: All FTA Members

Nominations are now being accepted for the following Table Officer positions: President-designate, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer as well as all Electoral District representatives. During last year's election the members overwhelmingly voted in favour of changing our electoral districts. Our new constitution has received approval from the Provincial Executive. The districts have been changed to align with the Divisional Areas. There will be two members elected from schools in Area I, two members from schools in Area II, and so on. The number of FTA executive members will remain the same however the representation from each area will be the same.

Nominations for FTA Executive positions, must be received by the Chief Returning Officer no later than twelve noon, the 1st day following the Spring Break. For this year, that means all nomination must be received in Wanipigow no later than noon of April 2nd, 2007. Nominations can be received via mail or fax. Please use the nomination and acceptance forms below. Please photocopy as necessary. In addition each candidate is asked to provide a brief biographical description of themselves that will be distributed to appropriate schools and work sites prior to the election.

Biographical sketches are limited to no more than two

hundred words and may include a picture of the candidate.

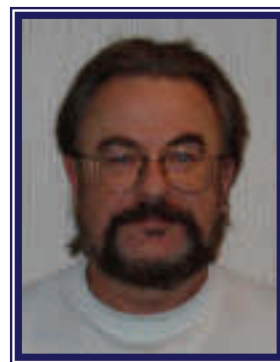
In each poll a deputy returning officer shall be named. Usually it will be the individual designated to act as the FTA contact person in each work site. In cases where the contact person is running for a position on the FTA executive, another person shall be designated and the Chief Returning Officer shall be informed. It is the duty of the deputy returning officer to create a voter's list at the work site. This list will include all members of the FTA (those that pay MTS dues) and all those people that have worked at the school as a substitute teacher at some point in the current school year. Under the Labour Relations Act all individuals that have worked as teachers or substitute teachers are eligible to vote. Please clearly distinguish, with a heading, those who are substitute teachers and those who are not.

Immediately after the closing of nomination, ballots will be distributed to all polls. Upon receipt of the ballots the Deputy Returning Officer of each site will take charge of ensuring that all eligible voters receive a ballot for the election of Table Officers and their District Representative. Voting will be conducted on the 1st school day in May. This year voting will take place on May 1st. A polling station will be designated by the Deputy Returning Officer in your school and voting take place close one hour following the end of the school day. The

polling booth will then close and the Deputy Returning Officer shall forward the count to the Chief Returning Officer by telephone or fax. The ballots shall immediately be forwarded to the President Designate as Chief Returning Officer to confirm the school count. Only those ballots received on the last mailing day prior to May 15th (this year it is May 14th) shall be considered in the final count. **This means that it is imperative that ballots be mailed immediately following the close of polls, preferably that same day.** In the case of a variance between the phone-in/Fax results and the final count, the final count shall prevail.

All candidates shall be apprised of the results of the preliminary count. Successful candidates will be notified no later than June 1st or the first day of school following June 1st.

Sincerely,
Michael Ferchuk
Chief Returning Officer



FTA Nomination Form (Deadline is April 2nd, 2007)

I nominate _____ for the position of _____
 _____ for the 2007 FTA elections.

 Signature

FTA Nomination Acceptance Form (Deadline is April 2nd, 2007)

I, _____ hereby accept the nomination for the
 position of _____ for the 2007 FTA elections.

 Signature



“The bottom line is that we would pay about \$400 a year for a \$200 benefit every SECOND year.”

Why Can't We Get Coverage for Glasses?

A common question about our employee benefits is “Why can't we get coverage for glasses?” While the Benefits Committee regards this issue as an ongoing concern, the basic answer to this question is cost.

On the surface, this type of coverage seems like a good idea, as most teachers wear glasses and would really benefit from the coverage. Unfortunately, this is also part of the reason why it would be too expensive. The premiums of our current health coverage (like all health insurance) is experience based, which means that the more you use the benefit's the higher the premiums will rise. If you take a look around our staffrooms and note how many of us wear glasses/contacts, you will realize that there would definitely be a high usage of such a benefit. The bottom line is that if we added glasses coverage to our current Blue Cross plan, we would pay about \$400 a year for a \$200 benefit every SECOND year.

So the real question is how much are you willing to pay for the benefit? And will it save you money? At this point in time there is no insurance carrier that will provide all the benefits we currently have as well as glasses coverage at a cost that would make the coverage economical. Furthermore, our Blue Cross premiums already increase every year primarily due to medical prescriptions, a benefit that everyone may need sometime in their life. Adding glasses coverage to this would simply make our premiums too high.

But that is not the end if the issue, as stated earlier. We continue to pursue the possibility of finding a provider to supply us with our current coverage as well as glasses—one that will be a real benefit. Meanwhile, we do have coverage for eye examinations.

Let YOUR Voice be Heard!**The Voice**

c/o Wendell Head
 P.O. Box 1032
 Norway House, MB R0B 1B0
 Phone: 204-359-8037
 Email: whead@frontierteachers.ca

FTA LOGO CONTEST!!

There were very few entries submitted for the FTA Logo Contest announced in our last newsletter, so we have decided to re-advertise and extend the deadline to March 16th, 2007. Submissions are to be sent to Wendell Head using the contact information above.

WINNER GETS \$100!

MTS Conference
Diversity, Democracy, Dignity
FREE REGISTRATION!!

The FTA is providing FOUR FREE registrations to the MTS Conference "Diversity, Democracy, Dignity" being held in Winnipeg on April 26th and 27th. All FTA members who are interested in attending this conference are asked to submit their names by fax (204-357-2178) or by phone (204-357-2225) to Edie Turner by 3:30 pm on March 2nd, 2007. The draw will be on March 17th, 2007 at the next FTA Executive meeting, after which the four winners will be notified.

The Division will cover the salary and sub costs of the four winners so they can attend the Conference. Travel and accommodations are the responsibility of the winners.

FTA Executive - Contact Information**Dean Elliott – President**

Joseph H. Kerr School
 Snow Lake
 Work: 358-2281 Home: 358-9143
 Email: delliott@frontierteachers.ca

Michael Ferchuk – President Designate

Wanipigow School, Wanipigow
 Work: 363-7253 Home: 363-7317
 Secure Fax: 363-7459
 Email: mferchuk@frontierteachers.ca

Wendell Head – Vice-President / Public Relations

HBOIERC, Norway House
 Work: 359-4100 Home: 359-8037
 Email: whead@frontierteachers.ca

Erin Williams – Past-President / Grievances & Disputes

Wanipigow School, Wanipigow
 Work: 363-7253 Home: 363-7533
 Email: ewilliams@frontierteachers.ca

Dodie Johnston – Treasurer

FCI, Cranberry Portage
 Work: 472-3431 Home: 472-3072
 Secure Fax: 472-3992
 Email: djohnston@frontierteachers.ca

Scott Miller – Collective Bargaining

Gillam School, Gillam
 Work: 652-2193 Home: 652-2316
 Fax: 652-2150
 Email: smiller@frontierteachers.ca

Byron Apetagon – Archival

HBOIERC, Norway House
 Work: 359-4100 Home: 359-4587
 Email: bapetagon@frontierteachers.ca

Edie Turner – Equality In Education

Cormorant Lake School, Cormorant
 Work: 357-2225 Home: 357-2057
 Fax: 357-2178
 Email: eturner@frontierteachers.ca

Heather Paul – Employee Benefits

HBOIERC, Norway House
 Work: 359-4100 Home: 359-6698
 Email: hpaul@frontierteachers.ca

Shawn Hafenbrak – Housing

Waterhen School, Waterhen
 Work: 628-3443 Home: 656-4132
 Fax: 628-3571
 Email: shafenbrak@frontierteachers.ca

Ms. Laurie Fourre – Secretary

Grand Rapids School, Grand Rapids
 Work: 639-2451 Home: 639-2527
 Fax: 639-2605
 Email: lfourre@frontierteachers.ca

Linda Smerch – Workplace Safety & Health

Cranberry Portage Elementary,
 Cranberry Portage
 Work: 472-3250 Home: 472-3388
 Fax: 472-3622
 Email: lsmerch@frontierteachers.ca

Larrie Head – Professional Development

HBOIERC – Norway House
 Work: 359-4100 Home: 359-8426
 Email: lhead@frontierteachers.ca

Nancy Whiteway – Ad Hoc

Beren's River School, Beren's River
 Work: 382-2153 Fax: 382-2422
 Email: nwhiteway@frontierteachers.ca

Linda Reed - District 8

Leaf Rapids Education Centre,
 Leaf Rapids
 Work: 473-2403 Home: 473-2385
 Fax: 473-8632
 Email: lreed@frontierteachers.ca

Terry Stover - District 10

The Duke of Marlborough School,
 Churchill
 Work: 675-2737 Home: 675-2278
 Email: tstover@frontierteachers.ca