

**Inside this issue:**

<i>Change is Good</i>	2
<i>Winners!</i>	2
<i>Professional Development</i>	3
<i>Scott Miller's Letter to Pat Isaak</i>	4
<i>Pat Isaak Replies to FTA</i>	5
<i>Wellness Corner</i>	7
<i>Contact the FTA</i>	8



**FTA**  
**Meeting Schedule**

**October 25, 2008**

**December 13, 2008**

**March 14, 2009**

**May : TBA**

**June 13, 2009**

**Want to know something?  
Ask Dean!**

If you have questions, or want to know something about the FTA, your collective agreement, contract, benefits, Public Schools Act or anything else, just ask! Send your questions to

**Dean Elliot**

[delliott@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:delliott@frontierteachers.ca)

## **Negotiations Report**

As you are no doubt aware our collective agreement expires at the end of this school year. The task of negotiation a new collective agreement falls upon a new Negotiating Committee. This year the Negotiations Committee is composed of:

- Dean Elliott, Chairperson, Snow Lake
- Heather Paul, Norway House
- Larry Head, Barrows
- Aaron Cable, Cranberry Portage

The task of creating an opening package to present to the Board is where most of the preliminary work in Negotiations takes place. By the time you see this report you will already have filled out the Negotiations Survey. This instrument is where the Negotiations committee gets a feel for what is important to you our members. This is where ideas for new articles for the collective agreement opening package are put together.

It is critical that we receive a very high response from our survey. The information within can be used at the bargaining table to good advantage. So please make sure you have taken the time to fill out the survey and in the case of Area 1, 3 & 5 forward it to myself.

In addition, a community profile was sent to every FTA work site representative to fill out. It provides details on your community as well as a shopping cart of groceries that the FTA representative is to price



**Dean Elliott,**  
**Negotiations Chair**

(Continued from page 1)

out. The idea is that we will see what this shopping cart costs in each community in the Fall and then do another survey in the Spring and obtain a very real idea of the cost of Living in each community. Again this information may prove to be very valuable in this round of negotiations.

Negotiations can be a very long and protracted process. We will likely present our opening package to the Board representatives in late April or early May. Negotiations will likely continue well into the next school year. There is no such thing as a “speedy settlement” in today’s world. Please be patient and your committee will do our utmost to obtain the best possible collective agreement possible.

Should you have any ideas that you wish included in the discussions of the opening package please contact one of the above members of the negotiating committee.

## Winners!

FTA members were invited to submit their name in for a draw that covered the registration fee for two members to go to the MTS conference "Beyond the 3 R's held in Winnipeg April 8 and 9, 2008. Eleven names were submitted. The lucky winners are:

Heather Paul-Norway House  
Shawn Oswald-Waterhen

Congratulations Heather and Shawn!

Submitted by: Edie Turner



**Vivian McKenzie,  
Vice-President/  
Public Relations**

## ***Change is good.....I think!***

My mother always said, “Change is as good as a rest”, so here I am, looking for new challenges in my life. (Not that my life is bad!) It’s just that now I’ve been in the profession for 13 years and I’m ready for something a little more demanding, but something new, not more of the same.

As usual though, I’ve jumped in with both feet. Vice-president, that is. Have I bitten off more than I could chew? Am I in over my head? Oh well, in for a penny, in for a pound! (OK, enough of the bad clichés....)

The first meeting though, I could see I was in trouble...the trouble with having technology skills, that is. I have agreed to do the webpage. Except I have limited knowledge in web pages. It’s a daunting task for anyone, let alone someone who’s not too confident in this area.

And then Krista left us...and now, for the time being, I am doing this newsletter, too. But I’m new! What DO I do! (Isn’t this from Dr. Seuss or something?)

Anyway, like *Hockey Night in Canada*, I’m here with a new look (the newsletter, not me), new responsibilities, and have taken on the task as the new “webmaster”.

Well, change is good.....I think.



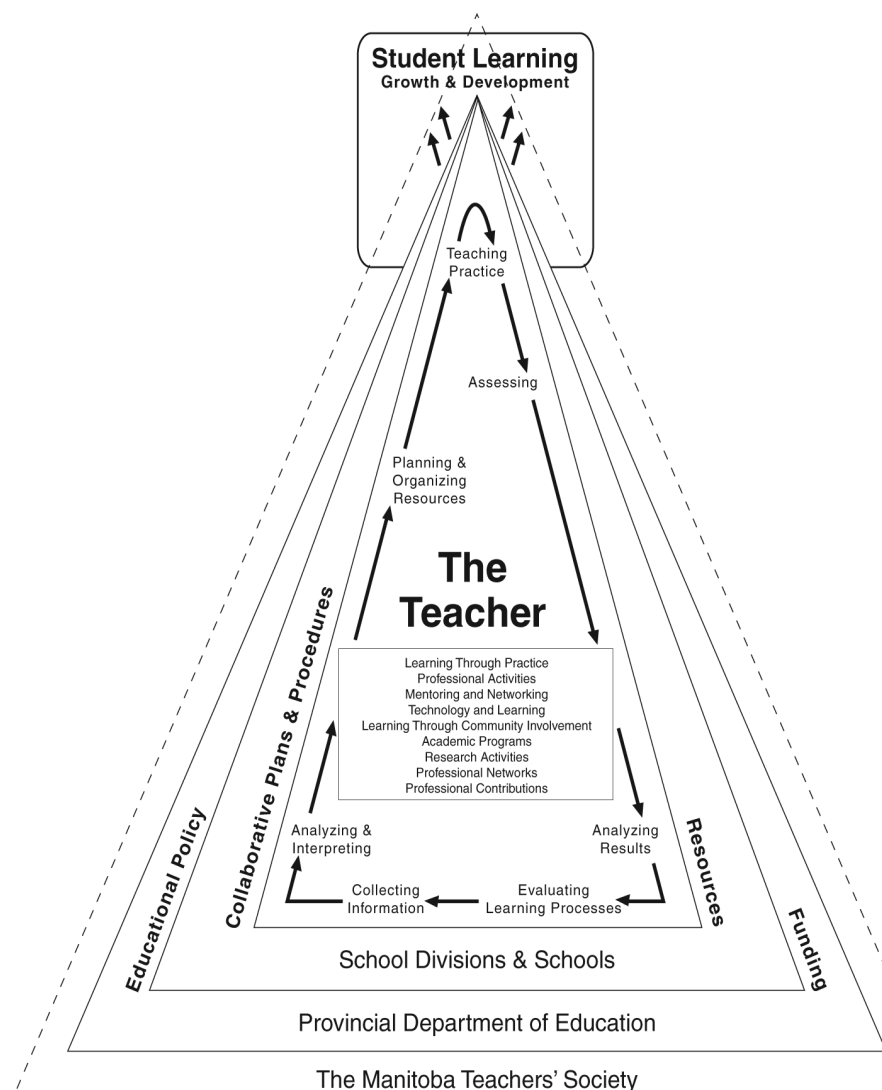
**Aaron Cable**

## Professional Development

*Aaron brings this information to us from a recent Professional Development seminar organized by MTS.*

The visual representation of the Model of Teacher Autonomy begins with **The Teacher** at the centre. **The Manitoba Teachers' Society** represents and supports all teachers employed in the public schools of Manitoba.

**Reflective Practice** can be represented visually by the circle of arrows in the inner triangle. The goals of **Student Learning** and **Growth and Development** are the main drive of all forms of Professional Development.



**Organizational Supports** such as Collaborative Plans & Procedures, Resources, Funding, and Education Policy, with School Divisions & Schools along side of the Provincial Department of Education provide the means and help to encourage as well as remind the teacher of the direction they want to go.

The **Ways of Organizing Professional Development** can be represented as a boxed list in the center of the model. They are :

- Learning through practice
- Professional activities
- Mentoring and networking
- Technology and learning
- Learning through community involvement
- Academic programs
- Research activities
- Professional networks
- Professional contributions



*In June, FTA president, Scott Miller, wrote this letter to Pat Isaak on behalf of Frontier Teachers who were concerned about the way in which the COLA plebiscite was conducted.*

June 27th, 2008

Dear Pat;

My name is Scott Miller and I am the president of the Frontier Teachers' Association. The reason for this letter is to express my concerns with the recent plebiscite. For an important issue as teachers' pensions and the cost of living adjustment, I do not view a 52% as a positive for the MTS position. In my view, this whole issue must be considered a defeat. Speaking for my Association alone, many of our schools did not receive the ballot until the last minute. And despite our best efforts, many of our more remote community teachers did not know or understand the issue and did not vote. Please, remember that for one reason or another, most of the teachers in Frontier School Division come from out of province. Unless sat down and talked to, these people do not get the problem or they are from out of province and it is not their concern. With this misunderstanding, they ask themselves why vote and if they do, they will vote for the Retired Teachers point of view. Therefore, it is my belief not enough money or time was spent rallying the teachers around the cause. If MTS would have spent a hundred thousand dollars achieving a result of 80% or better, it would have been money well spent. I do not know the amount spent, but I fear it was far less than necessary.

Next concern; many of the teachers in our Association did not receive ballots until after the plebiscite or just before the vote was held. In my case, I have lived in Manitoba for 26 years. I have lived at the same address for those 26 years. I received my ballot one week after everyone else in the school. I check my mail every day of the work week. Again the Society did not spend enough time or money checking the mailing addresses of the teachers. This was an important issue, one of the most important of the 26 years I have lived in Manitoba, and MTS could not spend the necessary money to check the mailing addresses for teachers living in the province.

The last concern is that those teachers that teach within our Division that do come from the province of Manitoba, are second and sometimes even third generation teachers. RTAM did their job very well for those second and third generation teachers, as they held the RTAM line and convinced many staff to vote the RTAM line.

Respectfully yours;

Scott Miller, Frontier Teachers' Association President

A large, stylized orange flourish or swoosh that starts from the bottom right of the page and curves upwards and to the left, ending near the center of the page.



The  
Manitoba  
Teachers'  
Society

191 Harcourt Street • Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2 • Phone: 888-7961 or 1-800-262-8803 • Fax: 831-0877 or 1-800-665-0584

[www.mbteach.org](http://www.mbteach.org)

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Scott Miller, President  
Frontier Teachers' Association  
Box 641  
Gillam, MB R0B 0L0

Dear Scott

Thank you for your letter of June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008, regarding the pension plebiscite. You raise a number of concerns in your letter that are certainly shared by all of us.

It's important to know that the plebiscite was requested by MTS, but the actual vote itself was carried out by an external accounting firm. MTS did not organize the vote or provide the database for the plebiscite (the database was provided by TRAF), and we certainly did not control the timing of the ballots being sent or received.

When the idea of a plebiscite was first raised by MTS at the Pension Task Force, we identified many of the timing issues that you raised in your letter. In particular, we were concerned about the time needed to reach members in rural, northern and remote areas and the difficulty in getting information to those members in order for them to have the necessary time to ask questions and discuss the plebiscite issue.

Our goal since the Sale Report was issued was to get the improved COLA in place for 2008. The COLA adjustment to our pensions is paid on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Unfortunately, as I indicated to you in our conversation last week, we had to live with government's timetable to introduce the legislation before the end of the Spring session, which was on June 12<sup>th</sup>. That meant that all the ballots needed to be returned by the beginning of June, which left very little turnaround time for our members.

I understand and share the frustration of our members who either did not receive a ballot in time to vote or did not receive a ballot at all. Given the timelines, any errors in the database (i.e. incorrect or incomplete addresses, name changes, etc.) could not be discovered and corrected in time to send out new ballots.

I also understand your concern regarding the 52% positive response. Given the issues of timing and the complexity of the issue, I have to respectfully disagree with your view of the result as a defeat. While 52% may not be seen as an overwhelming endorsement, it does show that the majority of members—both active and retired—understand that the Sale Report provides a resolution to the COLA issue that balances the needs of both active and retired teachers.

- 2 -

Does the result mean that we have more work to do? Absolutely.

You are completely correct in saying that our pension plan is an important issue and that meeting face to face with members is the best way to communicate information and help them make the most informed decision possible. Again, I do wish that that time had been afforded to us on this issue, but as it was not, we had to work with the timelines we were given.

MTS did its very best to get information to Association Presidents and to every school, but you are quite right in saying that in an Association like Frontier, where your members do not enjoy the luxury of getting together on short notice, there were problems that we simply could not overcome on such short notice. Please understand that I am not making excuses for the difficult position that you were put in, but I do hope that you understand that we did the best we could under the circumstances.

In terms of spending money on this issue, that is always controversial. On almost every issue, we find that some members are critical that we spend too much money and others wish that we had spent more. This issue is a great example of that, and we tried hard to stay within a tight budget while reaching as many people as possible. We did try to use our website and email as much as possible given that we knew how slow the mail would be, but as you well know, that information is helpful only if people know it's there. At the end of the day, we spent somewhere between \$15 000 and \$20 000 on the plebiscite. We also learned some important lessons about what worked and what didn't, and that will help us on future issues.

I'm not quite sure how to address your comments about RTAM. Clearly, MTS and RTAM had different opinions about implementing the Sale Report. Our position from day one was clear: we wanted to do whatever we could to improve the COLA for retired teachers, but under absolutely no circumstances would we jeopardize the basic pension benefit for active and retired teachers. RTAM's position has also been clear: they want better COLAs (although they don't define what exactly they want) and if the money has to come from the basic benefit then that's what should happen.

Please understand, Scott, that **protecting your basic pension benefit is MTS's number one priority and we will simply not allow any government or group such as RTAM to place that benefit at risk.**

I'm one of those second generation teachers just like many FTA members. And I understand very well how we got into this problem with our COLA and I am absolutely confident that the MTS position on how to deal with this issue is the right position to take.

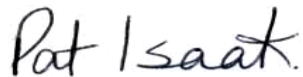
That said, I do understand the need for us to connect personally with our members, and with that in mind, I would love the opportunity to meet with you, your Executive, or any group of FTA members to talk about this issue and to answer whatever questions they may have. I realize that this won't affect the results of the plebiscite that has already taken place, but pension issues are long-term issues, and this plebiscite was just one piece of the issue.

I hope that helps a bit to answer your concerns, Scott. Please extend my apologies to your members for the logistical difficulties they faced during the plebiscite. And please let me know if there are any opportunities for me to meet with your members on this, or any other issue.

Thanks again for writing. If there's anything else you'd like to talk about, I'm around all summer. Please feel free to give me a call either at MTS (my direct line is 831-3080) or at home (489-0048).

Have a great summer!

Sincerely



Pat Isaak  
President



## Wellness Corner

### Stress Reduction Kit



**Bang  
Head  
Here**

Directions:

1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

Wellness is always an important topic for all teachers to think about. Many times we seem overwhelmed with all the things that need to be done. MTS strives to help teachers manage stress.

In a recent seminar, Libby Powell from the Primary Prevention team offered many ideas to help reduce stress. As a school counselor she has seen all kinds of stress and the health problems that come with it. One of my favorite things was the poster on the right—I think I'll hang it over my desk!

If you think your stress is overwhelming or ongoing, you can contact the MTS Primary Prevention Team at :

**EAP Office,  
#28—144 6th Street,  
Brandon, MB R7A3N2.  
Toll Free: 1-800-555-9336  
Phone: 1-204-571-2080  
Fax: 1-204-729-8869**



We're on the Web! [www.frontierteachers.ca](http://www.frontierteachers.ca)

## FTA Executive Contact Information:

**SCOTT MILLER**  
**President**

Gillam School, Gillam  
Work: 652-2193  
Home: 652-2316  
Fax: 652-2150  
Email: [smiller@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:smiller@frontierteachers.ca)

**Michael Ferchik**  
**Past President**

Wanipogow School, Wanipigow  
Work: 363-7253  
Home: 363-7317  
Secure Fax: 363-7459  
Email: [mferchuk@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:mferchuk@frontierteachers.ca)

**Dean Elliot**  
**President Designate**

Joseph H. Kerr School, Snow Lake  
Work: 358-2281  
Home: 358-9143  
Email: [delliott@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:delliott@frontierteachers.ca)

**Vivian McKenzie**  
**Vice-President/Public Relations**

FCI, Cranberry Portage  
Work: 472-9234  
Home: 472-3660  
Email: TBA

**Dodie Johnston**  
**Treasurer**

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

**Byron Apetagon**  
**Archival**

HBIOERC, Norway House  
Work: 359-4100  
Home: 359-4587  
Email:  
[bapetagon@frontierteachers.ca](mailto: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](mailto:eturner@frontierteachers.ca)

**Heather Paul**  
**Employee Benefits**

HBIOERC, Norway House  
Work: 359-4100  
Home: 359-6698  
Email: [hpaul@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:hpaul@frontierteachers.ca)

**Shawn Hafenbrak**  
**Housing**

Waterhen School, Waterhen  
Work: 628-3443  
Home: 6564132  
Fax: 628-3571  
Email: [shafenbrak@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:shafenbrak@frontierteachers.ca)

**Laurie Fourre**  
**Secretary**

Grand Rapids School, Grand Rapids  
Work: 639-2451  
Home: 639-2527  
Fax: 639-2605  
Email: [lfourre@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:lfourre@frontierteachers.ca)

**Aaron Cable**  
**Professional Development**

CPE School, Cranberry Portage  
Work: 472-3250  
Home: 472-3116  
Email: TBA

**Joanne Stover**  
**Ad Hoc**

The Duke of Marlborough School,  
Churchill  
Work: 472-9234  
Home: 472-3660  
Email: TBA

**Ethel Straker**  
**Workplace Health and Safety**

Beren's River School, Beren's River  
Work: 382-2153  
Home: 382-2671  
Fax: 382-2422  
Email: TBA

**Anne Watson**  
**Area 1 Representative**

Oscar Blackburn School, South Indian Lake  
Work: 374-2056  
Home: 374-2433  
Fax: 374-2052  
Email: TBA

**Larry Head**  
**Grievances and Disputes**

Mountainview School, Barrows  
Work: 545-6246  
Home: 545-2190  
Fax: 545-6228  
Email: TBA

### Let Us Hear YOUR Voice!

The FTA Voice is a publication by Association members for Association members. The goal is to keep FTA members informed of the business that the Executive is undertaking on their behalf. Let us hear what you have to say.

Questions, comments, or any concerns, can be sent to

**Vivian McKenzie** at FCI.

**Email: [bandit5@netkaster.ca](mailto:bandit5@netkaster.ca)**