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### FTA Meeting Schedule

December 13, 2008

March 14, 2009

May : TBA

June 13, 2009

### 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  
[vmckenzie@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:vmckenzie@frontierteachers.ca)



# The Voice

## President's Message

Hello to all the members of the Frontier Teachers' Association!

I am sure that by this time the shock of the new school year has decreased, and the waiting for the Christmas break has started.

This year proves to be a very interesting year for the FTA. First, our Collective Bargaining Committee must compile proposals for the upcoming Collective Agreement. The present Collective Agreement is up for re-negotiation as of June. The Collective Bargaining Committee has developed and distributed a survey to poll teachers concerns. Please feel free to contact any member of the FTA or myself to voice your opinion on future proposals.

Another matter of great concern for the association and the division is violence against teachers. It is of the utmost importance that not only the division is informed of these incidents, but the association must be informed as well. Violence against teachers is on the increase and the only way we, as an association, can protect teacher's interests is to know about this violence. Members, please remember that you can contact the association or MTS at anytime about your rights. Asking for advice on rights or informing others when your rights are violated, is not a violation of your Code of Professional Conduct, or a violation of the contract you sign with Frontier School Division. Violence against teachers is a serious issue and correction will only happen with your assistance.

Of course there are many other issues that the FTA will have do deal with this year, but with the team that I am working with, I am sure that we can meet all the challenges. Members, please phone, write or e-mail your opinions and concerns. It is your voices that make for a better and more complete Frontier Teachers' Association.





## Take the plunge into Technology

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

When I took on the job for public relations, I thought I was just going to do the webpage. (which I am painfully learning how to do!) But the public relations position has a lot more to it than that. I attended a seminar with MTS where we talked about communication, not only with members, but the general public as well. We looked at how to improve newsletters and webpages, to promote the good things teachers and students do, and to think about the future and how information communication technology can change the way we communicate and do things as teachers and learners.

Which leads me the point of my article. Recently I took a course with Brandon University, called ICT for Teachers. The focus of the course was how to make use of internet and on-line tools in the classroom. According to recent information, students are a lot more techno-savvy (real surprise!) than we ever were. We know that students, especially in senior years, are more motivated to look up information on the internet than in books. Students like to share and explore topics in different ways. They email, text, chat, blog and use public spaces like Facebook to keep in touch. No wonder letter writing skills are becoming obsolete! They use and share information differently than we ever did.

As teachers, we can use this to our advantage. How about implementing blogs and Wikispaces for journal writing? Or creating group projects using Google documents, class chat rooms and group spaces for information. Students like creating personal spaces for learning and it is certainly motivational for them.

This all sounds really great, but of course, there are always a few glitches. What if your internet connection is poor or non-existent? What about security issues? Or lack of technology skills?

First of all, your technician is now your

friend. Find out what you CAN do. Can you do some of this on an internal system in the school? Are their programs you can use in-class that might do the job?

Secondly of course, security is always an issue. Do things that benefit the students and keep things off the public domain. Keep in mind that we have a responsibility to protect children.

And, if your skills are not so great, take advantage of any training available to you. Ask other staff members for assistance. See what other teachers are doing. Or like me, check out distance ed courses.

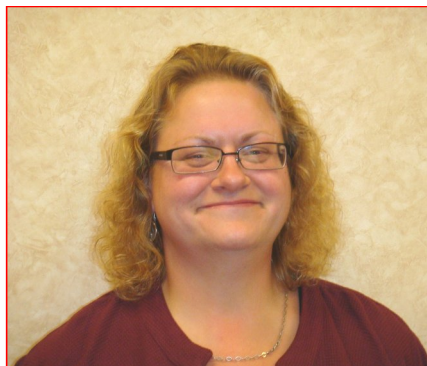
Go on....be brave. Don't let technology scare you. Jump in with both feet!



For those of you interested in working on your Graduate Diploma or your Masters degree on-line, check out distance ed courses from the university of your choice. Many are now offering these on-line in a variety of forms.

If interested in doing it through Brandon University, you can call the graduate studies department or email Ina Schumacher at [schumacheri@brandonu.ca](mailto:schumacheri@brandonu.ca)

## MTS Optional Life Insurance



**HEATHER PAUL**  
Employee Benefits

While we have basic life insurance coverage through the Manitoba Public School Employee Group life Insurance Plan (MPSEGLIP), some families may not feel it is enough coverage for your family needs. MTS offers and optional life insurance package to add to your present benefits.

Because MTS is a large group you get the benefits of the group pricing.

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### What can you get?:

- Coverage up to \$250,000 for you and your spouse
- Coverage up to \$50,000 thousand per child under 18 or 25 if still in school.
- Coverage for \$10,000 per child is free if one parent is insured
- Can also be used as mortgage insurance with a better rate than the banks.
- Coverage can be continued during leaves and after retirement up to age 70
- Can sign up for \$50,000 with out health questions if you apply with in 60 days of marriage or birth (and have not been previously declined)

Look for more information/ application forms in your school mail boxes in October.

### Good news!

During October 1<sup>st</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup>, you can sign up for \$30,000 in coverage with no medical checkup.

There has been a rate reduction for those under 45 years of age and are very competitive rates compared to other companies.

Information from Doug Dolman of Mercer Consulting.

### Home Insurance

If you are looking for home and or content insurance, MTS has a group with Cooperators with again very competitive rates. For homes that are in remote places this may be the only affordable plan, based on my own personal experiences. It's worth checking out. Mail outs were also in you mailboxes in October.

My apologies to Norway house for receiving French pamphlets. Remember to call me if you have questions and concerns about your benefits!

### Blue Cross Extended Health Plan

- Blue Cross has some improvements to their extended Health Plan Due to the good experience we have had in the last year.
- Dispensing Fees for pharmaceuticals will go up from \$4.00 to \$6.00
- Physio, chiro, and massage therapies will each go up from \$550.00 to \$700.00 per year
- some minor improvements to travel health benefit.

- when you log onto the Blue Cross e-service you can now get refunds directly deposited to your bank account. For quicker service.

Note: coverage can be maintained during leave of absence through giving post-dated cheques to the Division

- Effective Jan 1, 2009 the rates will increase only 5.7% due to a rebate on surplus funds this year

Although not many FTA members have the luxury of shopping around for much of anything let alone life saving medications, if you do make important purchases in Winnipeg, Thompson or Brandon, you might want to consider where you get your prescriptions filled. Blue Cross covers 80% of the drug cost and now \$6.00 for the dispensing fee. If the dispensing fee is greater than \$6.00 you will pay more for meds at different stores.

## The Job of the President of the FTA

by Scott Miller



I would like to take these few moments to talk about being President of the Frontier Teachers' Association. For most people the job would be a simple matter of calling meetings and conducting meetings correctly. This of course, brings us to the first problem; calling meetings within an association as large a Frontier's is a large undertaking. It is my job to fax agendas to all of the sitting members and the executive. Once this job is done, then we need to decide on an appropriate location for the meeting.

Being from Gillam, I had always assumed that the quickest and cheapest place to conduct meetings of the FTA was Thompson. I thought that the only reason we had meetings in Winnipeg was so the executive could shop at the members expense!. When I was elected

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## "Who? Me wrong? Never!"

If there are situations that arise in your professional Teaching career that require resource persons or materials or just some general clarification, the Frontier Teachers Association is always your best route. Being an active member of the Frontier Teachers Association gives you access to all resource and elected members of your FTA.

These people can and will assist you in all union matters or they will and can direct you to the information or resources that you may require. If you have a grievance or dispute that needs answers, you need to contact the Frontier Teachers Association. Your member responsible for Grievances and Disputes is Mr. Larrie Head.

Larrie can be contacted at the following:

Work: 204-545-6246

Home: 204-545-2211

email: [lhead@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:lhead@frontierteachers.ca)

[llhead@hotmail.co](mailto:llhead@hotmail.co)



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Grievances and Disputes

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**Mr. Larrie Head**  
General Delivery  
Barrows, Manitoba  
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**Mrs. Ethel Straker**  
Workplace Safety and Health

Ethel can be contacted at:

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Home: 204-382-2153

[estraker@frontierteacherrs.ca](mailto:estraker@frontierteacherrs.ca)

## Workplace Safety and Health

I am quite new to the Workplace Health & Safety portfolio, and I am still learning.

All schools should have had their Workplace Safety & Health Committee meetings and meetings should be 4 times a year during working hours. The second meeting should be this month.

Each school should have a binder from Workplace Safety and Health and one from Frontier School Division, displayed and readily available. There should be an Information Board set up with your last meeting minutes and any new information relating to WPS&H. Any concerns staff have about safety issues in their workplace should be addressed in these binders.

## Housing Help

Welcome back or, for the new staff, welcome to Frontier School Division. I am the Housing representative for Frontier Teachers Association. My portfolio is to try to help teachers with concerns that they may have with regards to their housing.

Here are some reminders that may help you throughout the year.

Any issues should first be raised with the administration at your school. Housing issues can often be resolved at that level.

If problems persist, contact your Area Superintendent to try and get them resolved. If the issue still cannot be resolved, contact myself or any member of the Executive and we will try to help you out.

Any work that you need done at your home needs to put on work orders. Keep records of the requests.

If a second request is needed, write down second notice but make sure you allow some time for the work to get done.

Read your Housing Handbook. It is available on the Division website. It is a good resource for your responsibilities. Example- Who is responsible to change light bulbs or furnace filters in my home?



Another good website is the Residential Tenancies Branch. It is a branch of government that deals with rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants.

The best advice that I can give to you is, If you're not sure about something, Ask!

I'm available to try and help you with your housing issue. The best way to contact me is at home. You can e-mail me at [shafenbrak@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:shafenbrak@frontierteachers.ca), but if you don't hear from me by the next day, call me at home, 204-656-4132.

### Wellness Corner

It's okay to ask for help. 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



### Reminder!

**If you attended SAG this year, remember to send your name to**

**Aaron Cable**  
**Professional Development**  
CPE School, Cranberry Portage  
Work: 472-3250  
Home: 472-3116  
Fax number 472-3622

Email: [acable@frontierteachers.ca](mailto:acable@frontierteachers.ca)

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to the FTA 10 years ago this was one of my major issues—we had to cut costs. Well, it's 10 years later, and we still have only one meeting per year in Thompson. The reason is because it is cheaper to fly, drive and pay hotel rates in Winnipeg than in Thompson. So much for my efforts to clean up graft! I have now become the problem. So, with Winnipeg being cheaper, we meet in Winnipeg. This also helps us to piggyback division Liaison Meetings with the FTA meetings at the same time. After all, Frontier's head office is in Winnipeg.

The next problem is to conduct an open and free meeting while following the correct rules of order, following the agenda, keeping people on topic, yet giving everyone a chance to speak. And as the president, I can voice no opinion at all. In fact, the first few of these problems, I have no problem at all—I have Laurie. She makes me follow the rules! I have Dodie to keep me on track. I have Dean to give lots of work, and a load voice to be heard over the din. The problem is I still have no opinion. In other words, I have a big mouth and cannot use it. Such is the life of power!

These jobs are easy and they are the jobs that most members would think a president does. However; we do have larger tasks. First we must make sure that the Collective Agreement signed between the Frontier Teachers' Association and the Frontier School Division is followed. I know most teachers look at the collective agreement as mere pieces of paper. But they are a great deal more. As far as the law of the province is concerned government legislation is the most important in the eyes of the law and collective agreements are the next most important. Even above school division or company policies. So, when teachers are told to do lunch hour duties, without a vote to take away that right, the administration of that school (should it happen) has broken the collective agreement and has therefore broken the law.

As a teacher, if you see the collective agreement being broken, give me or another FTA representative a call. You do not have to follow your teachers' code of conduct when the collective agreement is broken. The person or persons not following the collective agreement are breaking the law. You are calling in me to be the police to make sure the law (the collective agreement) is followed. This I what consider to be my most important duty as president of the FTA. If you feel your collective agreement has been breached, or

you feel your rights have been infringed upon, give me a call. If you like I could come to your community to speak to the teachers. Protection of the collective agreement is of the utmost importance for both the FTA and me.

The last job of the president of the FTA is to represent the association at MTS events. This may be the president's council, for example. President's Council is the organization supported by MTS that gets all the presidents from all the associations in Manitoba together to discuss important items. These discussion points include teacher workload, professional development, provincial bargaining and many others.

One of these issues—teacher workload—is one that we are dealing with in the immediate future. Some time over the next month or so, MTS will be sending teachers in Manitoba a short, two page survey on teacher workload. I am asking all Frontier teachers to please fill out this questionnaire as it is very important. It is only with the information from this survey that allows MTS and FTA to approach the division with a proposal to either receive more pay for teachers work or to try and reduce the workload of teachers.

On the issue of professional development, the association has been of the opinion that teachers should have a greater say in their own professional development. The division has always told the association that teachers in different areas of the division are consulted on the in-servicing they receive. It would be nice to hear how teachers feel about this consultation issue.

The last point involves provincial bargaining. This issue is a little more difficult to understand if you know very little or nothing at all about collective bargaining. At present, each association in the province holds a collective bargaining certificate to bargaining for the members of their associations. This means that we have 20 or more different collective agreements in the province of Manitoba. Most of these collective agreements have some items that are similar, such as a pay or salary scale. Most of the time, however, you find many things that are different. For example, Frontier teachers are paid once every two weeks and through the summer months. Some other divisions do not have this in their collective agreement. Frontier teachers also enjoy a housing allowance, an isolation allowance and many other items that other associations do not enjoy. Of course, other associations, most notably the Thompson Teachers' Association, enjoy other benefits that teachers within the FTA do not enjoy. The point I am trying



**Dean Elliott**  
President Designate



*The Job of President continued...*

to make is that different associations have different collective agreements, and some are better than others. I can say, however, that few collective agreements in the province are better than the collective agreement we have with Frontier School Division. That being said, there is always room for improvement!

Under provincial bargaining, MTS would bargain for all the teachers in the province. Although some may see the benefits of this action, I see trouble for the teachers who are members of the FTA. We are only a small voice in the province of Manitoba and we stand to lose a great deal. MTS is very good at saying that in provincial bargaining "the best of the best will be protected", but we in the FTA do not need the best of the best. To us, this is the minimum. We need better than the best. Just look at where we live. We are at a geographical disadvantage and deserve to be compensated as such. Therefore; for the FTA, provincial bargaining is a no go.

I hope I have explained the job of the president of the FTA and some of the major issues we are dealing with, so that the members understand my job. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at home, at school, or by e-mail, or even write me by snail mail. I would love to hear from the membership.

## **Special Leave: Policy GKAA**

This is one of the policies of the Frontier School Division Board that is near and dear to the hearts of many veteran Frontier teachers. This policy, in its many various amended forms, has been around for many, many years.

This policy essentially indicates that if you have been working with Frontier School Division for ten years or more you are eligible to take a leave of absence from Frontier School Division for a period of one year and the Division will pay you the difference between your base salary and that of a class 4 zero years experience teacher. According to the current collective agreement if you were a class 5 teacher, at the top of the pay scale, you would receive \$39, 251.00 less necessary deductions while on special leave. This sum of money would be paid to you over 26 equal instalments starting September 1<sup>st</sup>.

There are no strings attached to this leave. You can use it to further your education, go on an extended vacation, pursue another line of work, or even obtain a teaching position from another Division in Manitoba. You do not have to return to Frontier, however, you do have to abide by the timelines to resign your position.

When and if you return to Frontier every reasonable effort will be made by the division to return teachers to their position held at their originating school at the time of the leave. Specific teaching assignments may change. (You can take Special leave after 8 years of working with the Division provided that you commit to returning to work for the Division for an additional two years. Should you fail to do so the special leave payment received would need to be returned to the Division. (See policy GKAA for further details.)

During this last round of revisions, clarification has been made for those teachers that elect to take Special Leave as a bridge to retirement. Those teachers who retire at the end of the school year, prior to the commencement of the special leave, may elect to receive the special leave allowance as a retirement allowance. In this case, the allowance will be paid out in a single payment (interest discounted) by July 1. What this effectively means is that a teacher can retire, collect the special leave allowance and deposit it into an RRSP account. In this way the teacher can defer paying income tax on the allowance while at the same time collecting their TRAF pension. This is definitely a bonus to retiring teachers.

Remember applications for special leave are due no later than December 15<sup>th</sup>. Make sure that you use the appropriate application form included in the policy.



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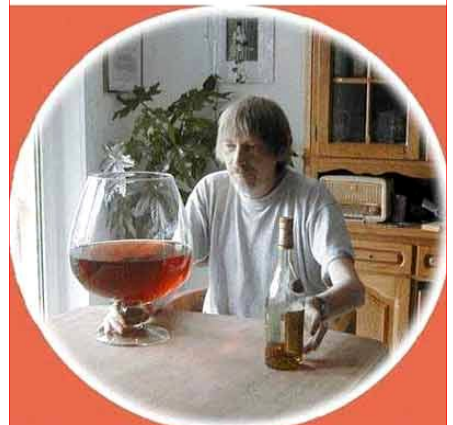
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My Doctor said "Only 1 glass of alcohol a day". I can live with that.



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