



President's Message

Welcome back! I know that by now, summer is a distant memory, but I hope everyone is settling back into their routines and you're enjoying the fall. It's hard to believe we are almost into first reports and conferences! This issue of the Acorn is a special one – it only comes around every 4 years – the "Election Issue". In this edition, we have asked trustee candidates to respond to some questions about teaching in Seven Oaks. Not everyone responded, but I am encouraged that more candidates responded to our questions than to Nick Martin's!

Teachers don't often see themselves as embroiled in politics. We are caregivers, nurturers, educators – those are not political roles. But consider this...Manitoba will spend

almost 2 BILLION dollars on education this year. We elect trustees to manage that money, but who elects them? How informed are the voters? The other day I was sitting in my living room and heard the mailbox close. It was a brochure from an incumbent trustee with *Sorry I missed you* pre-printed on it. But I was home! I have questions for my trustee candidates! I wonder how common that experience is – I would love to be more informed as a voter, but when people won't even ring the doorbell, I'm basing my decision mainly on election propaganda.

Every adult resident gets a vote, but how many choose to vote? I have a personal and vested interest in education, so of course I will vote and will email candidates with the questions I didn't get to ask at the door, but I can empathize with voter apathy. In the last civic election, voter turnout was 38.2%. That's not enough. There are people in our world who do not have this right. People have died for the right to vote. Poor cam-

paigned notwithstanding, as teachers, we need to vote. The City is implementing measures to make voting more accessible through advance polling stations in this election. So, I'm hoping you can find the time on October 27, or before, to get informed, then get out and vote for the trustees you feel best represent the learning needs of students.



Education is political. Teachers may not be, but education is. So in your area and in your schools, stand up and be counted for what you believe in. Indeed, it is one of the only chances we get to influence change in our local school boards.

Take care and be well.

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Return of the Volleyball Social on February 25th!



Start Practicing!! Contact Marco Lopes @EP for info!

Inside this issue:

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- Special Election Article
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- Economic Welfare Update
- Important Dates



Important Dates:

- Parenting Leave Seminar @ BZERC– Nov.4th
- Fall Wine and Cheese @GCCl– Nov. 30th
- Pre-Retirement Seminar– Jan. 22nd
- Volleyball social–Feb. 25th
- Long Service Wine and Cheese– May 31st



Special Election Article

- Municipal Elections will be held on Wednesday, October 27th, 2010. A total of nine trustees will be chosen for the three different wards.



Make your vote count!

- In Ward Two there are seven candidates running for four positions:

- * Ben Bansal
- * Derek Dabee
- * Ric Dela Cruz
- * Cory Juan
- * Bill McGowan
- * Dennis Ruggles
- * Kai Schioler

All of the school trustee candidates were contacted and asked to participate in a questionnaire regarding some of the issues facing public education today.

Questions:

1. Which three areas of education require immediate action in this jurisdiction? What are your three priorities in the coming year?
2. How does the board provide adequate support for special needs students?
3. Do you think the local school system has too many frills? What are those frills?
4. Should student achievement test results be used to evaluate teachers?
5. If you could increase funding to one area of education in Seven Oaks, what would you consider to be a priority?

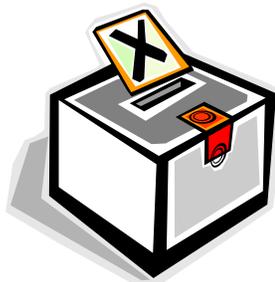
- In Ward One there are four candidates running for one position:

- * Peter Blahey
- * Roberta Marsh
- * Evelyn Myskiw
- * D'Anna Routley

- In Ward Three the following candidates have been acclaimed:

- * Teresa Jaworski
- * Claudia Sarbit
- * Edward Ploszay
- * Richard Sawka

**Evelyn Myskiw-
Ward One**



**Municipal
Elections-
Wednesday
October 27th**



1. Three areas that require immediate action: a change to the funding formula, to continue to fight for fairness and equitable funding for education, more schools to accommodate the growth in enrolment and a new addition to the West St. Paul School to include more classroom space, computer lab space and a daycare program.
2. The Board continues to work with parents of special needs students by providing the additional teacher and para support.
3. No, we do not have any frills. We are getting our resources to the classroom.
4. Achievement test results are used to evaluate learning, for student, parent and teacher
5. It's hard to pick one priority, more teachers, improvement to facilities, continue to build on successful programs.



Roberta Marsh- Ward One

1. ■■■■■ Overcrowding
■■■■■ Equitable resource & equipment allocation across all schools and all subject areas.
■■■■■ Building a “Balanced Classroom” an approach to constructing a classroom based on the needs of its students not just its numbers.
2. The Board sets philosophy, plans strategically, and allots budgets. Class size and makeup as well as staffing resources are important aspect of supporting special needs students. As a Board I believe that it is important to review class sizes and as well as their makeup in an effort to build a balanced classroom. I support the use of additional resources and encourage school-based decisions to moderate conditions.
3. I am not too sure what would constitute as a frill. I do not view programming, equipment, and resources as frills. I believe they are as important to our children’s learning as professional development opportunities are for our teachers.
4. No. Student learning abilities vary drastically as does the make up of today’s classroom. A test result is not an adequate reflection of a teacher’s performance in the classroom and is not a demonstration of all the time, resources, patience and pure teaching ability it can take to get one child to progress to a level where they are even able to write a test.
5. I would increase funding to ensure that every classroom is a balanced classroom with an appropriate student teacher ratio based on the make up of its students and their abilities.

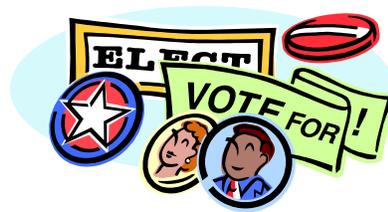
D’Anna Routley– Ward One

- 1). I feel three priorities for the next year are:
 - i). Ensuring Adequate resources - e.g., enough classroom space to adequately accommodate our student numbers while allowing for manageable class sizes (less than 30).
 - ii). Providing understandable and measureable reporting of students progress to parents.
 - iii). Providing challenges to ALL students, according to their abilities.
- 2). Are you referring to children with special physical or cognitive needs or both? All children are special and they all have their individual challenges which need supporting. Some do require more supports to meet these challenges. Through comprehensive IEPs (Individual Education Programs), the school is able to identify the specific needs of each child and work toward meeting those needs.
- 3) No. I do not believe the local school system has too many frills. On the contrary, they have needs that are not being adequately met, e.g., sufficient numbers of textbooks in high schools, enough classroom space (for example, I understand the computer lab in West St. Paul school has been relegated to the hallway to accommodate other classrooms).
- 4). No. There are too many variables involved in a classroom, e.g., the number of students, the individual student’s needs, and the supports / resources available to the teachers, to name a few.
- 5). Student enrichment programs.



Peter Blahey– Ward One

1. The provision of more classroom spaces for crowded schools and increasing enrolment and the need to address the level of provincial funding of education as it impacts on Seven Oaks require action. My priorities for the coming year will be to become familiar with the Seven Oaks of today- the programs, staff and the issues as quickly as possible. I would rely on input from staff, administration, and the community-, not on pre-conceived notions or beliefs.
2. Priority for funding of any program should be on “must-have” program areas. Discretionary programs (“should-have” and “would-like-to have”) will need to be reviewed and prioritized when budget decisions are made. The scope of special need support, similarly, will need to be reviewed, like any other program, to define the “must-have” and the discretionary (if any) components. Clearly, input from administration will be necessary.
3. Teaching is a complex and challenging effort. The public expectations of schools to address some issues could contribute to curriculum “overload”- some of which might be defined as frills.
Frills could include programs that: are not directly related to the primary mandate of public schools, have a limited or narrow scope, may be available elsewhere, are not eligible for funding from the Province, or are not self-sustaining financially.
4. Definitely not. Student achievement is a function of many variables, some of which are unrelated to teacher effectiveness.
Student achievement test results, can be valuable indicators of weaknesses and strengths in program components and as diagnostic indicators of student performance, but not as measures of teacher effectiveness.
5. Programs or initiatives that enhance the physical fitness and other lifestyle choices of students would be an area of education that I would support.



Derek Dabee– Ward Two

1. a) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – ensure that all schools are fully equipped and teachers are fully trained.
b) Sustainable Development – reducing ecological footprint through energy reduction and enhancing the recycling programs in all schools; healthy living (healthy foods in all schools); aboriginal education.
c) School Portables – pressed the Provincial government to provide funding to build new school to ease classroom overcrowding.
d) Adequate funding – pressed the Provincial Government to provide higher financial funding for the Division.
2. Fully trained special-education teachers and education assistants so there is a sustainable student-teacher ratio that meets provincial guidelines.
3. No. I do not think our local school system has many frills. On the contrary...
4. No. Student’s academic results are a product of numerous socio-economic variables – family mobility, poverty, family stability, available of educational resources, classroom overcrowding, student-teacher ratio, etc. Also, a student’s academic performance in one subject area is dependent on other subject areas (for example, a student’s academic performance in Science is dependent on how well he/she does in Mathematics and ELA, hence, it would be near impossible to evaluate the Science teacher based only on that student’s academic results in Science).
5. Information and Communication Technology/more support for teachers - teacher training.



1. My three priorities will be the following:

- Invest more in technology (computers and smart boards) for learning enhancement to students.
- Capital projects, most schools in our school division are over capacity.
- Equitable funding from the Provincial government.

2. Special Needs Students are no less than any person. As a parent with a physically and mentally challenged daughter, I will advocate their needs as students in our school division.

3. When I was a trustee, I personally was not aware of any frills offered by the school division.

4. Student test results are only part of the whole learning experience of any student. The most important aspect will be a balanced learning approach. To evaluate the teachers based on a partial time frame will not be accurate. For me the main rule of a school or a teacher is to unlock the potential of each student and become a good citizen.

5. Smart Board in each classroom.

Bill McGowan– Ward Two

1. The Government formula for granting Division funds needs to be changed, modified or even scrapped. It is inequitable as it is currently applied. Seven Oaks suffers each time it is allocated.

We desperately need two new schools to accommodate the children that have come into our Division in the last two years, one in Amber Trails and another in Riverbend.

Seven Oaks is the fastest growing School Division in the City, with that growth, we must closely monitor our Pupil/Teacher ratio and hire teachers as the need arises.

2. The Board provides adequate supplies for Special Needs Students by having physical therapists, special equipment, massage units etc. We also provide specially trained Para professionals to work one on one with the students wherever possible.

3. No, I don't think we have too many frills.

4. No, tests results should not be used to evaluate teachers. Performance indicators such as in class observers and personal growth file reviews are better tools to evaluate our teachers.

5. If I could increase funding to one area of education in my division it would be to increase staff levels! With the large number of students coming into our Division I want to ensure our Pupil/Teacher ratio stays within reason.

Richard Sawka– Ward Three

1. Issues that require immediate action are the shortage of classroom space and education funding. Seven Oaks has increasing enrollment which puts pressure on our existing infrastructure. Villages of portable classrooms are popping up in the school grounds of our most crowded schools. Library space, computer labs and even the occasional science lab are being used as classroom space. Portables are an interim fix, but long term we need more permanent classroom space. My priority in the upcoming year is to work with the Public Schools Finance Board to approve a new school in Riverbend (K-5 French immersion) and a new school north of Leila North (K-8). A new wing (8 or 12 classrooms) is also planned on the north/east part of West Kildonan Collegiate. Education funding will continue to be on the top of my list until the funding formula is "fixed" by the province. Seven Oaks pays much higher property taxes than other urban school divisions when comparing houses of equal value. This is due to the lack of business/industrial tax base. More of the burden falls on the home owner (high mil rate). Although we made significant gains with our Two-Tiered Education campaign last year, we still have far to go.

2. I think that Seven Oaks provides a higher level of support for special need students than any other division in the province. We embrace the concept of inclusion, where all students learn in the same classroom space. We do not have "special needs classrooms". Are enough supports provided? There could always be more, but I am confident that we are doing an excellent job with the resources available.

3. I cannot think of any "frills" that we have in our school division, but I can think of a few valuable services that we provide to our students that other divisions do not:

Bussing for K-3 students that live further than 1.2 km from the school. Other divisions will not bus unless the student lives further than 1.6 km.

Lunch hour supervision is provided at no cost to the parents.



4. This is a common practice in the USA that does not work. I do not think that it is fair to the student or the teacher. A teacher in this situation would be driven to “teach to the test” and omit other important material.
5. I have always considered early childhood education to be a top priority. I would like to offer half day nursery school across the division. Winnipeg school division provides a nursery program and if the funding formula was

Claudia Sarbit – Ward Three

1. -Lobbying the provincial government for quick approval for 2 additional schools to deal with the overcrowded situation in the division because of unprecedented growth in student numbers-. We are the fastest growing division in all of Manitoba and the only growing division in Winnipeg. At present there are 24 portables on school grounds to accommodate our increased student population which is putting a strain on teachers and students.

-Lobbying the provincial government for equitable funding for our students to both maintain and increase the programs and services they require and for less reliance on property taxes to fund education.

-Expanding the Bright Futures program east of McPhillips with the goal of increasing high school graduation rates and post secondary attendance of our students.

2. I believe that we can still do more in terms of providing adequate support for special needs students. We have advocated for a better funding model from government to address this problem. There should be long term stable funding from government for all students so that no division has less resources and support for these students than others. At present we have a combination of paraprofessional and teacher support for special needs students but feel we need a better ratio of staff to special needs students. The division has 2 special needs coordinators and extra support for students with autism. Each school is also provided with resource teachers who provide additional support to classroom teachers. This year we negotiated with the province that special needs students get block funding which enables us to do more with students in classrooms and less time on paperwork. This allows for less labeling of children and creates a more positive relationship with families. We will also be providing in-service training and workshops for teachers on an ongoing basis

3. No. I definitely do not believe that. I believe strongly in giving children a well rounded education where each child can reach his full potential and go on to become contributing members of society as per our mission statement. We have no other choice than to believe that every child can achieve success, will graduate from high school, and go on to live fulfilling lives. Good teachers, strong academics, arts, music, physical education, sports programs, and a variety of optional courses are vital to an enriching and enjoyable school experience.

4. No, not solely. There are many more criteria that determine excellence in teaching which are far more valid.

5. I believe that receiving the best education should not be based on a family’s economic circumstances. We need to ensure that children who come from aboriginal and low poverty situations have the same opportunities as all other children.

Edward Ploszay – Ward Three

school divisions in the city and all of Manitoba

1. a) continue with pressure on Provincial Government with regards to funding that should be fair and equitable for all

b) Continue to find cost savings on the operational side of the school division. These savings should be put back into the school division.

c) Communication between the board and all groups within the Seven Oaks School Division: parents, teachers, students.

2. Comes back to communication between the board and front line workers, teachers and support staff. What do you need to do your job?



Edward Ploszay– Continued

- 3. You can never have enough money for the classroom and our students.
- 4. No, every classroom is different year to year and principals and vice principals know their teachers.
- 5. My priority would be early years to elementary years (K-5). Find the problem, provide support and build a solid foundation in early years and you will have a greater payback in the future.

We're on the web!
www.sotamb.org

Thank you to all of the
 candidates who answered the
 questionnaire!
 Remember to vote on October
 27th, 2010!



*SOTA Retirement
 Dinner
 at The Gates*



*Attention all
 curlers!
 There are still
 spots available
 for curling
 teams on
 Wednesdays!
 Contact Murray
 Boyko for more
 information!*



June 15th, 2010



Economic Welfare Update



What's Happening Provincially

As of June 2010, 37 out of 38 Associations' contracts have expired. There are a few Associations that are currently bargaining, one of which is River East-Transcona Teachers' Association (RETTA).

RETTA tabled its opening package on April 19, 2010 and had a number of meetings from May 2010 into September 2010. At their September 20th bargaining meeting an impasse was declared. The Association is currently in the process of applying for arbitration.

What's Happening in SOTA

Seven Oaks Teachers' Association's Table Team presented the opening package on September 22nd. The Board responded on October 7th. Two subsequent meetings have been scheduled for December 2nd and December 15th.

As part of my presentation at the September 21st Head Councillor Orientation, we reviewed a few highlights of our collective agreement such as:

- guaranteed preparation time
- maternity/adoptive/parental leave top-up
- 125 days of accumulated sick leave
- a cost-shared health/vision/dental plan
- a process to protect teachers in case of complaint
- duty-free meal period
- voluntary participation in extra-curricular activities

With 80 new teachers hired this year alone, it is important for us to remind ourselves that the working conditions we enjoy today were rights that were not given to us, but hard fought at the bargaining table.

It is also important to remind ourselves that, as Dr. Sybil Shack states:

"...a battle never stays won. Rights and freedoms have to be constantly defended...and won again and again. Unfortunately, history places no obligation on those who have not lived through its incidents; memories are short and issues once resolved have an ugly habit of re-appearing as if they had never been considered before."

Leslie Deck – SOTA Vice President – Economic Welfare

Education is Political –

Get in the Game!



**Basketball Coaches needed!
for kids ages 13-17 yrs!**

contact Tom Barak @ Maples CC

204-772-7321

SOTA Table Team

Leslie Deck - SOTA Vice President

Brian Boychuk - Forest Park School

Gail Kress - Garden City Collegiate

Jamie Krutkevich Slight - SOTA President

Orah Moss - SOTA Past President

Jeff Morris - O.V. Jewitt

Henry Shyka - MTS Staff Officer



October 14th, 2010



SOTA
SWAG



Drinks, snacks, and
pool



New
Member
Event

