

Overview of the Manitoba School Boards Association and its Programs, Services and Personnel

What is MSBA? For over a century, the Manitoba School Boards Association and its predecessor organizations have represented the collective voice of Manitoba's public school boards. With a legislative mandate to promote the cause of public education in Manitoba, and with universal membership of all 38 public school boards in our province, MSBA serves to provide leadership, advocacy and services in support of our members.

What programs and services are provided to school boards as an MSBA member?

As members of MSBA, public school boards are able to access a variety of important services, including:

- **Advocacy:** with dedicated capacity for monitoring emerging trends and developments in the policy, legal and political environments of public education in Manitoba and across Canada, MSBA develops a variety of responses, position papers, government briefs and other advocacy resources to promote the best interests of our members. As an example of such products, MSBA recently engaged with school boards across the province as they led the way with a successful campaign against the Bill 64 legislation that was bound for implementation July 2022.



MSBA also meets annually with members of all provincial political parties, a variety of external stakeholder groups, and educational partners. On behalf of its membership, the Association is represented on a variety of task groups and committees with mandates to develop or advance public education. In addition, MSBA convenes regional meetings and an annual convention for its membership each year. Through these venues, MSBA regularly dialogues with its members and with its partners, to ensure the timely communication of items of significance or impact to our members. In turn, MSBA also communicates our membership's requirements and concerns to relevant partners and audiences by way of engaging more broadly in advocacy on behalf of our membership.

- **Governance and Professional Development:** equipped with expertise in the area of education and communications services, MSBA offers several meaningful board development, governance and professional development (PD) opportunities for public school boards. MSBA responds to regional or individual member needs by offering standing PD workshops each year, while also offering one on one governance seminars and workshops to boards through our full-time board governance services Director. MSBA also offers support to members in the areas of strategic planning, policy development and implementation, and effective and efficient governance, in keeping with our membership's specific authorities under the public education legislative framework of Manitoba. MSBA's website provides members with a repository of board policy manuals and online information that aims to promote excellence in member responsibilities and communications.



- **Labour Relations:** every member of MSBA is assigned with a dedicated labour relations expert who is available on an as-needed basis for responding to inquiries in the area of employer relations with employees. The MSBA labour relations team serves to coordinate collective bargaining processes across all employee locals. Availability of labour relations capacity and expertise through MSBA signifies that individual members avoid unnecessary expenses involved with development or duplication of the same labour relations capacity, while also creating the advantage of member access to a central repository of resources, publications and counsel related to the highly specialized and important board role of serving as an employing authority for teaching and non-teaching personnel.



- Provincial Teacher Bargaining and Human Resources Services:** In 2022, the Manitoba Government proclaimed Bill 45, effectively establishing a single provincial bargaining table for teachers. MSBA, named as agent on behalf of 37 of the 38 public school divisions, has operationalized this agency role by establishing a table team and Provincial Bargaining Advisory Group that is broadly representative of school board interests in teacher bargaining province-wide. Additionally, the establishment of this unit gave rise to opportunities for the Association to expand the scope of its services to include Human Resources support. Under this service mandate, MSBA is able to provide coaching and networking for HR administrators province-wide, while also supporting divisions with executive and employee search, recruitment and contracting.


- The Manitoba School Insurance Program (MSIP)** was established in 1978 and serves to insure all physical assets owned by, and to protect against any potential liabilities that might be incurred by MSBA members. Premiums are rendered more affordable for members due to the collective purchase of insurance (through HUB International Inc.) for all public school boards. MSIP provides **Financial Loss Pools** that serves to offset the adjustment expenses and deductibles that would otherwise be required in the event of repair or replacement of an asset that has been damaged or destroyed, or in the case of a liability claim against the school board. MSIP also guarantees the availability of risk management capacity in support of MSBA members, including access to the latest expertise and guidelines for best practice in the minimization of risk and liability, as well as on-site inspections and workshops related to risk management, as well as workplace health and safety.


- The Pension Plan for Non-Teaching Employees** was established in 1974 as a defined contribution pension option for participating members. Under The Public Schools Act (section 50) all public school boards are required to establish a pension plan for non-teaching employees. Under the MSBA non-teaching plan, employers and employees contribute to a diversified investment portfolio that serves to promote competitive market returns for all non-teaching employees who have reached the age of retirement. While most defined benefit plans guarantee retirees a fixed monthly income following their retirement, thereby creating an ongoing financial liability for the employer, defined contribution plans provide for retirees to access their accumulated contributions upon retirement through Income Funds or purchase of an annuity. Following release of the employee account, the employer is no longer liable for maintaining any contributions in support of their pensioners' post-retirement income. The Pension Plan for Non-Teaching Employees is overseen by a trust committee comprised of representatives from MSBA, employing school boards, employee groups and a MASBO representative. **The Pension Administration Fund** as established, covers all plan expenses and is funded by school divisions as an added benefit to the plan's membership.


- The Manitoba Universal Standards Trust (MUST) Fund** is a collective financial pool that provides school divisions access to funds to cover certain legal costs associated with labour relations challenges from employees and or Unions. The purpose of the (MUST) Fund is to assist school divisions in protecting and maintaining management rights in the area of labour relations, when those rights are challenged or disputed. Such challenges or disputes have the potential to impact on the rights of other school divisions within their region, or province wide. It is the objective of the MUST Fund to assist participating member school divisions by covering the legal costs (excluding damages) related to labour relations issues between the employer and employees or their union/association/legal representation. The MUST Fund will cover legal fees arising from: grievances and rights grievance arbitrations, interest arbitrations, union certification, labour issues or complaints that go to judicial bodies such as the courts, Manitoba Labour Board, or Manitoba Human Rights Commission, other employee/labour matters of provincial or regional implication.


- Manitoba School Employees Benefit Plans:** In partnership with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, MSBA maintains a combination of health and dental benefit plans (through Manitoba Blue Cross), as well as group life and disability insurance (through Canada Life and The Co-operators) for the advantage of employees of public school boards. Purchased collectively, the benefits that are secured under this partnership are rendered more affordable for MSBA members and staff than would be true if individual school boards were to purchase comparable benefit plans on their own, to serve the needs of their employees.



Key personalities at the Association (December, 2022)

- **Janis Arnold** – As Director, Governance and Professional Development Services. Janis serves as the main point of contact for all items directed by you, our members, to the association in respect of board governance practices and policy, interpretation of legal and regulatory frameworks pertaining to board operations, and requests for one-on-one and/or customized training, facilitation of strategic planning and professional development as needed. jarnold@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Morgan Whiteway** – As Director, Labour Relations Services, Morgan serves as the point of contact for daily labour relations issues management, including interpretation of collective agreements, discipline/review, operationalization of board policy in LR matters, leading non-instructional bargaining, retaining general oversight of the non-teaching pension trust and joint health and dental benefits programs. Morgan also exercises principal responsibilities for informing pandemic response, workforce planning and other subcommittees. mwhiteway@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Labour Relations Consultant Team** – enhances the association’s capacity to respond to membership needs and requirements related to labour relations and human resources. The team’s service to members serves to promote quality and accessibility to real-time labour relations support and counsel for all divisions. **Alison Bourrier** abourrier@mbschoolboards.ca; **Chris Huppe** chuppe@mbschoolboards.ca; **Elizabeth Mitchell** emitchell@mbschoolboards.ca; **Tripat Pachu** tpachu@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Cindy Hluszok** – As Research Analyst for Labour Relations and the Human Resource Services & Provincial Bargaining departments, Cindy serves as the critical research analyst and statistician in support of the core mandates of those units. She also coordinates a variety of surveys to school divisions such as the Board Office Compensation Survey. chluszok@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Justin Rempel** – As Director, Human Resources Services & Provincial Bargaining, Justin is the point of contact for daily human resource services, including search, recruitment and information sharing through the provincial HR network. Justin coordinates the Provincial Teacher Bargaining Table under Bill 45 and serves as lead negotiator at that table. He also exercises general oversight of the Manitoba Universal Standards Trust (MUST Fund). **Jodie Taylor**, the Senior HR Leader, provides key support to boards in the new service area of Human Resources Services and Support. jrempel@mbschoolboards.ca; jtaylor@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Robyn Winters** – As Chief Financial Officer, Robyn exercises responsibility for financial administration and management of MSBA’s operations (including those of the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba), including disbursement of funding and rebates under the Manitoba Schools Insurance, Loss Pools, Pension Trust, etc. She is the point of contact for external grant disbursement. **Tara Alexander** serves as Finance Assistant in support of financial administration responsibilities at the Association. Robyn is also responsible for general oversight of the Manitoba Schools Insurance program, with **Darren Thomas** reporting to Robyn in his role as the association’s Risk Manager. Darren’s scope of service to our members is focused on risk management and insurance services, with coordination of safety inspections, workplace safety and health workshops, and management of the Safe Grad and TADD programs. rwinters@mbschoolboards.ca; dthomas@mbschoolboards.ca; talexander@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Josh Watt** – As Executive Director, Josh exercises general oversight of the Association’s administration and operations with major responsibility for all advocacy and communications. In concert with **Karen Harrington** and **Jennifer Esau**, he maintains a viable web and social media presence on behalf of the Association, while overseeing communications services. Together, the Executive Office is generally responsible for both convention planning and the association’s annual policy and resolutions development process. Karen and Jennifer’s services are marked by high degrees of autonomy internally to the association, in respect of communications products and webmaster services. Through the Executive Office, the association is happy to continue reviewing draft communications produced by members, should any division wish to receive a set of “third eyes” or “second thought” on any public interface or messaging you may wish to convey to your communities or stakeholders. [Josh Watt jwatt@mbschoolboards.ca](mailto:jwatt@mbschoolboards.ca); Karen Harrington kharrington@mbschoolboards.ca; Jennifer Esau jesau@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Andrea Kehler** – serves as both Executive Assistant to the Executive Office while also providing administrative support to Darren Thomas as Risk Manager. akehler@mbschoolboards.ca
- **Heather Hallatt**– provides administrative assistance exclusively to the Director of Labour Relations and the Director of Human Resources Services & Provincial Bargaining and their teams. hhallatt@mbschoolboards.ca