

January 21, 2013

Dear members and colleagues:

I am writing to you today to ask for your continued support in an historic undertaking. It is one that stands at the nexus of who we are as teachers, and the work that the Society does for teachers and public education at a political level.

Elected representatives from your teacher association will be coming to Winnipeg for our Annual General Meeting on May 23rd-25th, 2013. We do this every year in our work to help shape better schools for our students and our members. In addition to our usual work, this year your delegates will be asked a particularly momentous question:

Will the millions of people — including the hundreds of thousands of students and their teachers — who enter the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, be able to use "The Manitoba Teachers' Society Classroom" ... or not?

The very first room in the Museum to actually *be* "a room", to have walls, to take form, was its classroom. The entire Museum will be a place of learning, to be sure, but the beating heart, and the *raison d'être* of it, is education.

Any number of corporations would like to hang a plaque with their logo on that classroom door. At least two other Canadian teacher organizations are hoping to do so as well. However, in recognition of the contributions in funding and expertise that Manitoba teachers have already invested, the museum has given MTS the right of first refusal to purchase the "naming rights" for the CMHR's classroom. This final contribution would ensure both a state-of-the art classroom setup, and a contribution to the overall outfitting of the museum.

The Canadian Museum of Human Rights is the first national museum ever built outside of Ottawa. It is also the first Human Rights Museum anywhere in the world. To date, MTS has already contributed \$62,000 of your MTS dues to the CMHR. We were one of the very first non-governmental donors to put our support behind this most important of undertakings.

More detailed information is included with this letter, but I'll "cut to the chase": we're asking you for \$1.50 a month for 5 years as part of your MTS dues. It's a lot of member money, all told, and that's why we're being especially careful to ensure that you're well informed, and able to give your association Presidents and Executive members clear input. But it's also the price of a cup of coffee per month to build a better future.

Every day, we welcome children and families into our schools from every corner of the province and of the world. They have known and lived poverty, war, disease, famine, and exploitation in their most heinous forms. Despite great progress having been made, we still — today — have students who fear entering our schools because of the colour of their skin, their gender identity or orientation, their sex, or their creed. We teach many subjects — but first, we teach people. And any teacher who's been in the field for more than a few weeks has looked into the very old eyes of a very young child, and felt a shudder. For many people, human rights are an academic abstraction. For us, it's called "going to work".

As each of you works in your schools to address the endless student need around you, I hope you will also be able to support our efforts to combine our forces for something bigger than ourselves, that goes to the root of so many of the challenges we address every day.

Please ensure your delegates to the 2013 AGM hear your voice on this historic matter. You can also reach me directly at polson@mbteach.org.

To teach is to create a legacy and a future in the most human terms, for the sake of our children, and their children.

As a father, a husband, a citizen, a proud Manitoban, your President, and most of all as a fellow teacher, I thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Olson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Paul Olson
President