

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - NEGOTIATIONS AND MOBILIZATION



Good day everyone.

It seems like only a few months ago that we finally signed a Provincial Entente. Yet here we are again, ramping up for a Provincial Negotiation. The Provincial Government invoked a three-year contract during the last round (which is in the collective agreements) after having the last few contracts have a five year mandate. The consultation of the membership will occur on a virtual platform this round and the results will determine what the demand to the government will be on behalf of teachers. I encourage you to have your voice heard. The consultation will occur between March 7 and March 18th. After compiling the results, the demand will be formulated and issued to the government early in the next school year. I will be available to go to schools or centres, and meet with staffs, that wish to review the consultation document.

The WQTA and QPAT continue to lobby the School Board and Government on health matters. This includes the availability of N-95 masks for staff who wish to use them, better ventilation (not just the opening of windows), enhanced cleaning protocols to state a few of the items.

In the E News there are some important dates that have been outlined. If you are considering a leave of absence, partial workload (partial leave of absence), deferred sabbatical etc...then please take the time to familiarize yourself with those important dates.

WQTA tries to keep you informed of the continual changing landscape whether it be from Ministerial Decrees or letters from the Ministry or new health measures. I cannot thank the delegates enough for their support and help in sharing the information with the membership.

Take care of yourselves.
Stay safe and stay healthy.

Brian
Brian Smeltzer
WQTA President

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Many and limitless thanks to our WQTA delegates and executive members during these exceptional times.



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

April 1st - This is the date to notify your School Administration of your ***teaching preference*** for next year. There should be an approved form to complete that has passed through your School Council. You may want to include in the form what you taught this year, what you prefer for next year and what you prefer to not teach next year. Your WQTA delegate was given a sample of a workload preference form. Your School Council can modify or begin from scratch. This is a contractual obligation and should be in writing. Be sure to keep a copy for your records.



April 1st – This is the date to request a leave of absence for the following year. Your letter should be mailed to the School Board to the attention of Mr. Terry Kharyati. Be sure to keep a copy of this document for your records. You may cc the WQTA if you so wish. The WQTA can help you with the letter, if you wish.

FAQ Section:

Do I lose seniority on a Leave of Absence?

No, you continue to accumulate seniority as if you were teaching. You may not gain an experience step depending on what you do with your leave. (yes, if you are studying full time or working in a field related to teaching).

What happens upon my return, where do I go?

The School Board assumes you are returning to the same school. You may contact your principal with respect to your workload. Be sure the principal knows what courses you prefer to teach by April 1st.

Can I ask for another leave of absence?

Yes, make your request by April 1st. The Board considers the leaves from year to year.

What about my insurance coverage?

You must continue your health plan coverage unless you opt out to a spouse's or partner's plan. The School Board will send you a bill (or the Insurance company).

Can I change my mind on a leave of absence after applying and being granted?

You may ask the School Board to rescind the request but they are under no obligation to do so.

What about my pension?

You may buy back your pension for the time you were on a leave of absence BUT remember that you will have to pay back the equivalent of your share and the employer's contribution share.

April 1st - Thinking about *progressive retirement*? Workloads can be as low as 40% and the percentage may change from year to year. Progressive retirement cannot exceed five years. Applications for Progressive Retirement have to be made to the School Board prior to April 1st.

May 1st - This is the last date to request a part-time leave of absence. The request must be in writing to the Human Resources Director, Mr. Terry Kharyati. A partial leave of absence, up to 20%, resulting in an 80% workload or more does not require a pension buy back. The WQTA can help you with a letter, if you wish.

May 10th - Postings in schools of vacancies by category and sub category.

May 15th - Date by which the union must be informed of the board's intention to not renew the engagement of one or more teachers.

If you are considering a voluntary transfer, we suggest you send your request in writing to the Human Resource Director and to the WQTA President.

Process for a voluntary transfer:

- The teacher must be full-time.
- There must be a full-time position available in the school to transfer to; the transfer is possible only if the school has a full-time position available.
- The Board must agree to the transfer.
- Teacher advises his/her principal that he/she wants to transfer.
- Teacher advises his/her intentions to HR/WQTA.
- Teacher contacts the principal(s) of schools he/she wants to transfer to.
- Teacher submits an official written transfer request (jobs_emplois@wqsb.qc.ca) by applying to a full-time position when the vacancy list is posted.
- Consideration based on seniority will be given to teachers seeking voluntary transfer. A list of teachers requesting voluntary transfer will be forwarded to the union within five (5) working days after the deadline referred to in clause 5-21.17 of the local agreement.

May 17th - Last date to apply for any vacant position. This includes transfers. Applications must be in writing.

June 1st – Last date of the current school year whereby the Board must send a written notice to the teacher concerned and the union of its decision not to renew the engagement of the teacher for the following school year. This notice must contain the reason or reasons justifying the board's decision.

Prior to last day of school calendar – All teachers under regular contracts with the Board shall receive **in writing** from the principal a **tentative assignment** for the next school year. *Seniority, qualifications, preferences, and experience shall be considered when determining these assignment*

The board may only change the assignment of a teacher between July 1 and October 15 if there is a demonstrable need such as:

- a) A change in enrollment within a school;
- b) A change in enrollment within a discipline at the high school that brings about a redistribution of students in the school;
- c) The unavailability of planned physical or human resources.

TEACHING POSITIONS WITH THE WQSB

The Western Quebec School Board is always looking to fill teaching positions. If you, or anyone you know is qualified and interested, the following link must be used to apply for any available position:

<https://www.applytoeducation.com/Applicant/AttSearch.aspx>

SICK DAYS

The following explains the different types of sick days. The number of sick days credited to you for the current year, as well as any banked sick days, prior to 2015, from previous years, appears on the individual information sheet under the section “Bank of Sick Days”. This sheet is provided to each teacher by the School Board in the fall.



Every full time teacher will receive 6 moneyable sick days at the outset of each new school year. A part time teacher will receive the number of moneyable sick days in proportion to the percentage of their contract. For example a 70% part time teacher would receive 4.2 (6×0.70) moneyable sick days. On your individual information sheet this would be the number of days in **Code 01: Moneyable Sick Leave**. Since September 2016, any unused moneyable sick days are paid out to the teacher at the end of the school year or upon the termination of a contract.

From 1999-2015, the moneyable sick days were “banked”. On your individual information sheet you will note if you have any banked days from this period as it will appear as **Code 55: Teacher Sick Leave Credit**. Only full time teachers were able to bank these days, any teacher on a part time contract would have been paid out for any sick days at the end of their contract. The number of days banked each year was the number of moneyable sick days remaining at year-end minus one. This was a result of the government demanding concessions which valued 100 million dollars from the teachers and this concession was valued at 10 million dollars. For example if a teacher had 4.3 moneyable sick days remaining at year end, then 3.3 days ($4.3 - 1$) would be placed in the code 55 bank. The sick days in this bank will be paid out upon the retirement of the teacher or upon their resignation from the School Board. The number of banked days will be paid out at the rate of a teaching day of the last year taught, and not at the rate of when they were banked.

From 1995-1998, the moneyable sick days were “banked”. On your individual information sheet you will note if you have any banked days from this period as it will appear as **Code 20: Reserve Sick Leave**. Only full time teachers were able to bank these days. Part time teachers were paid out for their moneyable sick days. The sick days in this bank will be paid out to the teacher upon their retirement or upon their resignation from the School Board. The number of banked days will be paid out at the rate of a teaching day of the last year taught, and not at the rate of when they were banked.

Every full time teacher will receive 6 non-moneyable sick days at the outset of their career with the School Board. These six days are for the career of a teacher. These days are never replenished. A part time teacher will receive the number of non-moneyable days in proportion to their contract. For example, a part time teacher with a 60% contract would receive 3.6 (6×0.60) non-moneyable.

2.4 days to bring them to the maximum of 6 days. The non-moneyable days are listed on the individual information sheet as Code 03: Non-Moneyable Sick Leave. The non-moneyable days will not be paid out upon the retirement or resignation of the teacher.

Please note that when a teacher is required to use a sick day(s), they will be taken in the following order. If a code is depleted, then the next code is used.

- **Code 01: Moneyable Sick Leave** (moneyable at year-end)
- **Code 55: Teacher Sick Leave Credit** (banked days, paid out upon retirement or resignation)
- **Code 20: Reserve Sick Leave** (banked days, paid out upon retirement or resignation)
- **Code 03: Non-Moneyable Sick Leave** (non-moneyable)

When a teacher falls sick for an extended period with a doctor's note and is allotted salary insurance, the first five days come from the sick days in the order previously described.

Should you have any questions about your sick days, please feel free to contact your WQTA school delegate.

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT A DEFERRED SALARY SABBATICAL LEAVE?

There are ½ school year and full school year options. See the Appendix VIII in the Provincial Entente (page 240).

Some options:

2/3 plan whereby you will receive 66 2/3 % of your salary for the three years and will have the third year as a sabbatical.

3/4 plan whereby you will receive 75% of your salary for the four years and will have the fourth year as a sabbatical.

4/5 plan whereby you will receive 80 % of your salary for the five years and will have the fifth year as a sabbatical.

Note in all cases you must return to work following your sabbatical for an amount of time equivalent to the sabbatical time. Remember to make your **request by May 1st**. Any tenured teacher may apply for a sabbatical.

Note that you CANNOT do daily substitution while on a deferred salary (affects your pension)

Also if you become pregnant during your year off, there can be an impact on the QPIP as you may not be eligible for benefits or may have reduced benefits.

MULTI-GRADE CLASSES ALLOCATION FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Every year, the MEQ allocates funds as a supplementary measure (measure 30136) to provide support to elementary teachers who are assigned multi-grade (multi-level) classes. The amounts allocated to each school are intended for teachers who work with multi-grade classes and cover among other things, the purchase of materials, release time for the preparation of materials, and training (at the choice of the teachers concerned) for those groups. If you have a multi-level class consult your principal to be able to access these funds.

The WQTA is suggesting that the specialists who teach that group should meet with the homeroom teacher to proportion the amount of money based upon the time spent with the group. If you need more information, contact the WQTA.

OVERSIZE CLASS COMPENSATION

If you have an oversized class, you would have received a letter from your Principal in the fall confirming that you have an oversized class. In December, you would have received your first of two oversized class compensation payments this year. This payment would have been added to your normal bi-weekly direct deposit salary payment, and it would have also appeared on your pay stub. Along with this payment you should have received a form showing you the calculation used to determine your oversized class compensation. If you did not receive this calculation, please ask your principal. If you would like to double-check the calculation, please contact your school delegate. There is a one page summary posted on your WQTA bulletin board in your staff room.



VOCATIONAL TEACHERS - IMPORTANT



It is the responsibility of the teacher in the VOCATIONAL Sector to renew his or her Provisional Teaching Authorization (PTA) on time. Teachers who have full-time contracts and do not have their brevet, also need to renew their PTAs, receiving full-time contracts does not exempt teachers from continuing their studies and getting their teaching diploma.

HAVE YOU BEEN INJURED AT WORK? CNESST VS. SICK LEAVE?

The first step is to file an accident report at your school.

If medical assistance is required, or when you visit your doctor, be sure to let them know that you incurred the injury at work. This means that a CNESST (Health and Safety Commission) dossier will be opened. In these cases there are no sick days to be removed from your sick bank. The income replacement indemnity will begin as of the first day of absence for an occupational injury. Clause 5-10.45 of the collective agreement provides for the payment of the salary as if the teacher had been at work. The teacher will receive 100% of their net salary. Be sure to supply paperwork to the school board and it is highly recommended that a copy be sent to the WQTA.



RREGOP MAILING LIST



The RREGOP is our public-sector teacher pension plan and Retraite Québec (formerly CARRA) is the body that administers it. If you would like to join the mailing list to receive news concerning your pension plan, please use the following link:

http://www.carra.gouv.qc.ca/ang/liste_diffusion/inscription_participants.htm

If you are nearing retirement, the WQTA suggests that you contact Retraite Québec and request a DETAILED statement of contributions. The phone number is 1-800-463-5533.

STARLING MINDS

Starling Minds is an online mental health and wellness tool that helps you assess, monitor and improve your mental wellbeing. It consists of an interactive online program with surveys, videos and activities that gives you practical techniques for building stress resilience and boosting mental fitness. Starling Minds is a program already being used by other associations, including the B.C. Teachers' Federation. This service is being provided to you and your family at no cost by QPAT, and at no point will your school board have access to any of your information.



To sign up, go to www.starlingminds.com and click on the "Sign up" link at the top right. When asked for your Organizational ID, you must enter your Industrial Alliance certificate number (found on the front of your Industrial Alliance health insurance card). If you are covered under a spouse's insurance plan and do not have an Industrial Alliance certificate number, or if you are having trouble signing in, please contact Starling Minds at members@starlingminds.com.

SENDING INFORMATION OR PIC EXPENSES TO WQTA?



Please note the WQTA has moved, our new address is 102-183 Freeman, Gatineau, Qc. J8Z 2A7. Please ensure that the address is correct on the envelope and that there is sufficient postage. Taking a few minutes to ensure accuracy will expedite the expense claim process. Be sure to stay apprised of dates for postage cost increases.

CAR AND HOME INSURANCE

La Personnelle, the QPAT and WQTA insurance provider is offering car and home insurance. If members would like to get a quote (you could potentially save 20% or more!) for car or home insurance, you can make a call or request a quote online. You can find the directions to make a quote online through the WQTA website. If you are calling for a quote or request, mention you are a member of the WQTA in order to receive the rebate. If you are already have insurance through La Personnelle for your car or home, you can still make a request to see if the new rate through QPAT is less expensive. WQTA also receives a check of \$10 for each member who requests a quote for car or home insurance and mentions the WQTA (part of QPAT) to the agent



laPersonnelle

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL DEDUCTIONS FOR HOME OFFICE EXPENSES 2021 TAX YEAR

Are you about to start working on your personal income tax returns for 2021?

If you meet some of the conditions mentioned below you may be eligible to deduct some of the expenses you incurred. You are eligible if you worked more than 50% of your time for **at least one month (four weeks without interruption)** because of COVID-19 and your employer did not or will not reimburse you for the expenses.

You may want to use the *detailed method* to claim the actual amounts paid; this method has always been applicable for those individuals who work from home year after year. In this case, supporting documents will have to be provided by you and your employer. These deductions reduce the revenue on which you are paying income tax. **For more information:**

<https://www.revenuquebec.ca/en/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/faq-for-individuals/>

END OF YEAR EXAM UPDATE

There are no WQSB end of year exams for the 2021-2022 school year. However, individual schools can still implement their own end of year exams; this is a school-based decision. The Ministry of Education is going ahead with MEQ end of year exams, except for the Secondary IV History of Quebec and Canada course, in which the Ministry of Education will be providing a complementary examination.