



Vol. 1 - Issue 9 ~ May, 2020

ndta.ca

President's Message—When Will We Be Returning to Schools?

There were reports in the media late last week about students possibly returning to school buildings before the end of the school year, and possibly by mid-May. Members have expressed many concerns about this prospect. Health and safety are obviously the greatest concern, but people also wonder about workload for teachers, having to adapt their instruction yet again, and about the impact of the changes on students.

It is important to note that we already have students in schools: the children of essential service workers are receiving care at many of our school sites, staffed mainly by TTOCs who were hired for those positions. The categories of workers whose children qualify for the child care is broadening, so the program is expected to grow. The district has put health and safety precautions in place at all schools. These health and safety protocols were developed in consultation with the Ministry of Health and are pretty standard across the province. The NDTA and the CVTA also advocated during the planning stages to have low student-to adult ratios. Following a government directive, the school district is looking at opening further spots so that some vulnerable students who are capable of social distancing can also receive in-person support. Schools will need to assess these vulnerable students to determine how best to support them.

Throughout this time, there has been good collaboration between the union and the employer. Provincially, the BCTF has been in extensive contact with the Ministry of Education on COVID-19 issues since before Spring

When Will We Be Returning to Schools?

Break, and Teri Mooring speaks regularly with the Deputy Minister of Education, BCPSEA, and the BC School Superintendents' Association. She speaks with local presidents in meetings three times per week to report on provincial developments. Local presidents also engaged in an online meeting with one of the government's medical experts, Dr. Corneil. At the local level, I am in regular contact with HR and the Superintendent. From the onset, Doug from the CVTA and I pushed for all KLTF members to be able to work remotely, and for child care to be staffed by hiring TTOCs who wish to work rather than redeploying other teachers. All of you sharing your challenges and concerns has further helped me to advocate effectively on your behalf.

Ultimately, the decision about having more students return to schools will be up to the government (through the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry), and the union does not have any veto in the process. Our understanding is that Dr. Henry is closely following what is happening in both Norway and Denmark, where elementary students have already returned to school. All modelling to date suggests that BC is not following the same trajectory as Hubei Province in China nor Italy. Thus far, we have been fairly successful at flattening the curve. It is this modelling that will drive government decisions about what precautions are necessary. For the modeling information, please see this [LINK](#).

We have been assured that if and when students return to schools, it will be well-planned, gradual, and based on the most current available evidence about the health and safety risks involved, and the steps required to mitigate risk. The union will continue to advocate for the greatest possible health and safety precautions, and also for accommodations for members who would be at a greater risk (such as those who are immunocompromised or who live with people who are). Before even contemplating any return to schools, however, Dr Henry would like to see a few days with no new COVID cases in the province.

Finally, I want to acknowledge how hard you are all working and how flexible you have been to the changing circumstances throughout this process. You are all doing amazing work and I am proud to represent you and support you.

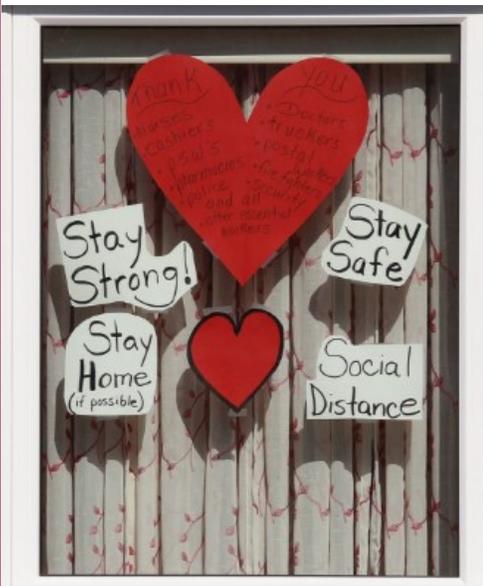
Remedy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to a number of district inquiries, BCPSEA and the BCTF recently discussed whether the process for calculating remedy as per the Collective Agreement could be suspended under the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The parties decided to keep the processes for remedy as status quo for the remainder of the school year.

Teachers' continued eligibility for remedy during this unique period (including the delivery of education methods to satisfy continuity of learning plans) is without prejudice to BCPSEA's—or any school district's—position that certain classes, such as distributed learning, are not subject to class size and composition restrictions and therefore ineligible for remedy under the MoA.

Given the unusual circumstances related to the current pandemic resulting in teachers' schedules being structured in non-traditional ways, we recommend that districts maintain good records of their provision of remedy.



Leaves and Your Pension

Members on paid leave of absence (LOA), such as sick days, Salary Indemnity Plan's short-term disability, or long-term disability, will receive full pension crediting. That is, there is no pensionable service (PS) to buy back.

Members on an unpaid LOA may buy-back PS up to the limit allowed by the Collective Agreement (CA). This purchase is done as a lump sum payment to the Teachers' Pension Plan after you return to work, or in one-year portions. The buy-backs of PS include periods of reduced assignment, arrears (missing contributions), non-contributory service, or child-rearing credits (as you near the end of your career—this one is free of charge). Unlike other leaves, there are special leaves as categorized by Part 6 of the *Employment Standards Act* (current to March 25, 2020), whereby the member pays only their portion of the pension contributions. These include, but are not limited to: pregnancy leave, parental or adoptive leave, family responsibility leave, bereavement leave, and compassionate care leave. Details can be found here: <https://tpp.pensionsbc.ca/taking-time-off-work-and-buying-service>.

Starting May 1, 2020, a **new payment option is available**. Members may choose to continue making contributions during the leave by direct payment to Teachers' Pension Plan, and they will invoice your employer separately for their portion of the cost. The details will be published on the Teachers' Pension Plan website (tpp.pensionsbc.ca) by mid-May.

For more information, check out the [April 6, Teachers' Pension Plan Communique](#).

Reduced Assignments (partial leaves)

In article C.22 of the Collective agreement, it states:

A continuing full-time teacher may, without prejudice to that appointment, request a part-time assignment. The teacher shall specify the fraction of time and the period for which the part-time assignment is requested, at the time of making the request. The Superintendent or designate shall not unreasonably refuse such requests. And

A teacher who receives a part-time appointment under sub-section C.22.1.a, shall be entitled to return to a full-time appointment, similar to one previously occupied, at the expiration of the part-time appointment. The teacher may return to a full-time appointment at an earlier date, or may extend the period of part-time appointment upon the approval of the Superintendent or designate.

I bring this to your attention, as the employer is trying to change practice by denying partial leaves and stating that the district does not approve leaves for more than one year. Past practice is that we do allow teachers to take reduced assignments for multiple years and many of our members take advantage of this when they are starting families and their children are young.

The confusion comes as there were changes to section G of the CA which has to do with other types of leaves. There were no changes to section C as that section falls under the jurisdiction of articles in the CA that need to be bargained provincially. If you are having difficulty getting your leave approved, please let the local know.

Ratification of Tentative Agreement

Voting on our tentative agreement begins tomorrow and is open until April 30, 2020. The BCTF will be sending you an email this evening from vote@simplyvoting.com. The email will include a link specific to you. When the voting officially opens, you simply need to click the link and vote. Once your ballot has been cast, your link will no longer be active.

If you don't receive an email from Simply Voting, by the evening of April 28th, send an email to votesupport@bctf.ca and their technical team will respond and help you.

This agreement is being unanimously recommended by the bargaining team and the BCTF executive. Here are some of the highlights:

The tentative agreement contains no concessions on existing language nor the elimination of any locally negotiated provisions.

There is a 2% salary increase for all members in each of the three years of the collective agreement. 2% for the first year will be retroactive to July 1, 2019.

Members at the top step of the salary grid will receive an additional 1% on July 1, 2020.

There is a possibility of an additional 1% at the top of the grid in July 2021 subject to agreement on a new process to replace "Best Efforts" from the 2017 MoA.

Effective July 1, 2021, teachers in their first year who are in a contract, or who accept a continuing or temporary contract will be moved to the second step of the grid.

Allowances in local agreements will be increased by 2% for: department head; positions of special responsibility, etc.

12 million provincially to set up an early career teacher mentorship to be determined by the union.

Ability to port up to 20 years seniority across the province.

5 days paid leave for Aboriginal teachers to attend cultural events

For more, please see the members' portal.

NDTA Elections

It is that time of year where we would normally be booking a large room to have snacks and elect some folks to our NDTA executive. Alas, we will not be booking a physical space this year due to the pandemic, however, we will still be having elections for our local. We have been in consultation with the BCTF and other locals to determine the platform to best help us achieve this and we are putting our plan into place as we speak.

We would therefore like to invite you to put forth names for executive positions for the 2020/2021 union year. You may nominate yourself or someone else for a particular position.

The positions available are:

- President
- Vice-president
- Local Representative
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Bargaining Chair
- Aboriginal Education Chair
- French Language Chair
- Social Justice Chair
- Education Committee Representative
- Technology Committee Representative
- TTOC Chair (Elected in the Fall)



All nominations will be done through our nominating committee email which is: ndtaelections@gmail.com.

The nominating committee is responsible for all communication from candidates to the membership after nominations have closed. Nominations will be open from Monday, April 27, 2020, until Monday, May 8th. Elections will be held electronically on May 21 and 22, 2020.

As you can imagine, with the COVID-19 disruption, we are having to deviate from NDTA policy a bit. Normally candidates for NDTA positions can come from the floor of our General Meeting, however, due to our need to vote electronically, all candidate nominations will need to be into the nominating committee by May 8th in order for campaign materials to be distributed electronically, if necessary, and for electronic voting to be set up.