



November 2020 RETТА REPORT - FAQs

On behalf of the entire RETТА executive, please know that we all hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during this time. Below is a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** that we are receiving at the RETТА office.

Please forward any comments or questions to cdarazsi@retta.ca.

SICK DAYS

- **Do I have to be docked sick days while awaiting COVID test results?**

The current divisional position is **YES**. If you are away due to anything medical-related, including symptoms that may have led to the need for a COVID test, those would be considered sick days.

****Please note that, other than prepping for your substitute as you usually would, you are not required to work or perform duties associated with your role if you are using sick days.****

- **If I need to stay home for a COVID-related reason but am not symptomatic (i.e. awaiting test results as a close contact, self-isolating because a family member is symptomatic and awaiting test results), do I have to use sick days?**

Same answer as above.

- **If my child is sick or has to get a COVID test and I need to stay home with them, can I use my sick days?**

Yes.

- **What happens when I run out of sick days?**

This is an ongoing question to which we still have no answer from the division. We have sent a formal request to the division asking for more sick days, particularly for those at higher risk of running out. We have also requested that the division re-assign members to work from home if they are not ill but must be at home for COVID related reasons to avoid eroding their sick day balance.

WORKLOAD

- **What do I do if my workload has increased substantially?**

The first step is always to speak to your supervisor regarding your concerns. If your concerns are not resolved with the first step, please contact the RETТА office. The workload terms, as stated in Article 15 of the Collective Agreement, can be found [here](#).

BARGAINING

- **I heard that there is new legislation introduced for centralized bargaining. What does this mean?**

The provincial government introduced two new Bills on November 2nd. **Bill 45**- The Public Schools Amendment and Manitoba Teachers' Society Amendment Act and **Bill 64**- The Education Modernization Act.

Bill 45 amends the Public Schools Act to establish centralized (provincial) bargaining for teachers employed in the public school system. Click [here](#) for more information on provincial bargaining and MTS's position.

There are no details for **Bill 64** at the time of writing this.

- **When will we have a new Collective Agreement (CA)?**

Our CA expired in 2018. This remains in effect until a new agreement is bargained. The new agreement could be a provincial agreement if Bill 45 is passed. Since 2018 we have sent letters to the board requesting to sit down at the table and negotiate a new agreement. The board has claimed to be bound by the government to offer Bill 28



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parameters (0%, 0%, 0.75%, 1%), impeding our ability to participate in a fair and open bargaining system. With none of the other 37 Associations successful at the bargaining table, we continued with a province-wide lead table arbitration strategy.

Louis Riel Teachers' Association was the first Local to go through the arbitration process in November 2019. The lead table strategy and the arbitration process are the only mechanisms we have to break the government's mandate of wage freezes. LRTA was successful in breaking Bill 28 parameters. Also, Bill 28 was declared unconstitutional in the Charter Challenge. **Read more [here](#) about Bill 28.**

The Pembina Trails Teachers' Association and MTS staff are in the final stages of preparing the written brief for the Board conducting the Pembina Trails arbitration, scheduled for January 4- 8, 11, and 12, 2021.

Our lead table strategy and the arbitration process are the only mechanisms we have to break the government's mandate of wage freezes. Notwithstanding the recent court decision that held Bill 28 undermined public sector collective bargaining and violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Government has filed a motion to appeal this decision and is pressing on with a 0% bargaining mandate in an attempt to cut the real salaries of teachers and other public employees.

We will continue to follow the lead table strategy, with the two arbitrations' intention to set the bargaining pattern for the other 36 Local's. We will continue to inform our members as the process moves forward.

- **Can we strike?**

No. Strike, or any form of job action, is illegal. Our dispute resolution mechanism is binding arbitration.

- **What happened to all that money from the federal government?**

School divisions are still struggling to access the \$85.4 million sent by the federal government to support schools during the pandemic. Applications for this funding have been made to the province, but to the best of our knowledge, no school division has been able to access the money. Most school divisions, including RETSD, have spent their COVID savings from the spring, which was a condition of access to the additional government funds.

[This letter](#) was sent to Premier Brian Pallister on September 1st, calling on the government to use the recently announced \$85.4 million in federal funding to ensure that schools are safe and ready for the return of staff and students. The letter was also sent to the leaders of the opposition parties, Wab Kinew and Dougald Lamont.

WELLNESS

- **What supports are available for Wellness?**

- MTS offers a free, confidential counselling service through the [Educator Assistance Program](#) (EAP).
 - Members also have access to their [Bluecross Benefits plan](#), which was recently expanded to include **counselling coverage**.
 - We also have access to the digital wellness platform [LifeSpeak](#), which is available to all members and families registered for My Profile on the MTS website. LifeSpeak provides access to 800 vignettes in French and English on a variety of Health/Financial/career-related topics inclusive of Mental Health, written and hosted by Nationally recognized experts along with monthly highlighted topics with expert blogs.
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COMMUNICATION

- **What is MTS doing to advocate for teachers?**

The Society has been working to ensure that the return to school is safe and sustainable. [Read more about MTS positions and concerns here.](#)

- **Is there anything that I can do to make my voice heard?**

Yes. You can **contact your local MLA**. If you have anything you'd like to bring to the attention of your local MLA, for example, the fact that school divisions still have not been given access to the federal COVID relief funding that was allocated for education, their contact information can be found [here](#). [Here is a guide to help with your letter.](#)

****Remember that you represent yourself as a parent or individual teacher, not teachers in general****

Did you know...?

- Teachers have FREE access to the following wellness apps.
 - Meditation and sleep app [Ten Percent Happier](#).
 - Meditation app [Headspace](#).
- Manitoba Education has compiled a list of [FAQs](#) re. Public Health measures in schools.
- Your employer has a **legal duty to provide reasonable accommodation** for employees' needs, where those who are otherwise able to work can do so where working conditions can be adjusted to meet their needs. Click [here](#) for more information on the duty to accommodate.

