



December 2020

RETТА REPORT - FAQs

On behalf of the entire RETTA 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 RETTA 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.

However, *the position of RETTA and MTS is that sick days should be used only when a teacher is actually sick*. If a teacher is isolating but is not actually sick, arrangements should be made to work from home. Contact an MTS Staff Officer if this is not the case.

****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.****

What do the new teacher exemptions mean?

Public Health has confirmed that asymptomatic teachers with a symptomatic household member are exempt from self-isolation orders, as long as the teacher wears a medical mask. If **you** are symptomatic, please visit the government's [COVID-19 resource page](#) for information on self-isolation.

What happens when I run out of sick days?

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. The division has denied our request.

It is important to note that members have access to the MTS Disability plan. To qualify for benefits, one must be unable to perform their regular duties due to a disabling condition, lasting at least three days, **supported by medical evidence**. For example, if an individual does have COVID, then that is a medically disabling condition. If the condition lasts three days or more, and they have no sick time, a Case Manager will adjudicate the claim under Short Term Disability.

Also, all Canadians are eligible for the [Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit](#) under CRA. It provides income replacement of up to \$500 (taxable) for one week where there is no sick time available.

WORKLOAD

What do I do if my workload has increased substantially?

The first step is always to speak to your principal/supervisor regarding your concerns. If your concerns are not resolved with the first step, please contact the RETTA office at office@retta.ca or contact Chris directly at cdarazsi@retta.ca. The workload terms, as stated in Article 15 of the Collective Agreement, can be found [here](#).





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TEACHERS REGAIN PD DAYS

I heard that the government added 3 PD days for teachers. Does this mean the school year is three days longer?

No. Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen announced that three non-instructional days taken from teachers at the beginning of the school year would be re-added to the 2020-21 school calendar. Two of these days will be scheduled before Christmas and one in the second semester. Divisions will incorporate these days into their calendars where it fits best. [Click here](#) to read MTS's position about how this addition does not address workload concerns.

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 CA 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 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.

The lead table strategy and the arbitration process are the only mechanisms we have to break the government's mandate of wage freezes. The Louis Riel Teachers' Association was the first Local to go through the arbitration process in November 2019. 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.

LRTA was successful in breaking Bill 28 parameters. Soon after this win, the courts declared [Bill 28 unconstitutional in](#) the Charter Challenge. 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. Teachers in Manitoba gave up the ability to strike in the 1950s in lieu of Binding Interest Arbitration as the dispute resolution





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mechanism. In other words, when the two parties can't come to an agreement through bargaining, it goes to an arbitration board. This has worked well for us in the past. Some concerns with striking include; being locked out, loss of pay, and potential loss of public support.

What happened to all that money from the federal government?

School divisions are still struggling to access the \$85.4 million promised 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.

WSH

I have many concerns surrounding COVID-19 and my worksite safety (K-3 students not wearing masks, students not being 2m apart, working at school while Winnipeg is in Code Red, etc.). What can I do to voice my concerns?

With any WSH concern, the first step is always to report it to your supervisor. If your concern is not resolved and the problem persists, then the second step is to [file a workplace safety/incident report](#).

It is important to follow the reporting protocol for many different reasons. [Here is a guide](#) on what and how to report. Also, you can always contact Kirsten directly at kmundle@retta.ca if you have questions.

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 now includes **counselling coverage**.
- [LifeSpeak](#) is a digital wellness platform 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 written and hosted by Nationally recognized experts.
- Teachers have FREE access to the following wellness apps.
 - Meditation and sleep app [Ten Percent Happier](#).
 - Meditation app [Headspace](#).

COMMUNICATION

What is MTS doing to advocate for teachers?

The Society has been working to ensure that the work environment of its members is safe and sustainable. [Read more about MTS positions and concerns here](#). MTS has been in the news and media daily. [Here](#) is a letter written by James Bedford to Premier Brain Pallister published on November 11th in the Winnipeg Free Press. MTS members had a chance to ask questions and share concerns during an MTS hosted virtual [Town Hall](#) on November 24th.

Please continue to follow MTS on social media and check their website for regular updates.

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





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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. [Here is a guide to help with your letter.](#)

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

