



March 20, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

During these unprecedented and uncertain times, I will do everything that I can to keep you informed of what is happening and how it affects you. I am in regular contact with QPAT, ESSB and the Presidents of the other English teacher unions in the province. Please follow the ESTA Facebook page or our website for the most up to date information. As the ESTA office is in my home, it remains open. If you do not get a response to a question that you have sent me, it's because I am trying to find the answer, which is not always an easy thing to do. Below is an outline of the most recent updates that I have. Please read over it carefully.

### **Ministry Decree**

Many misconceptions are circulating about the government announcement of a decree. This is not a suspension of our entire collective agreement. Three articles have been temporarily suspended to allow for the possibility of teachers being asked to do other jobs within the school board. At this time the only thing that may happen, is that teachers in the Gaspé and Sept-Îles areas, could be asked to volunteer to work at the daycares at Flemming and Gaspé Elementary. These day cares need to remain open to offer child care to essential personnel and need people to work there. Teachers with school aged children can bring their children to those day cares free of charge if they are volunteering to work there. As the situation unfolds there could be changes to what is being asked of teachers but for now that is all that could be asked of you.

### **Leaves of Absence and Progressive retirements**

The April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for application for leaves of absence and progressive retirements for the 2020-2021 school year will NOT be changed. The school board needs this information. Teachers who wish to apply for these should email their requests to their administrator before the end of March. You MUST have approval from your administrator to apply for these. Keep in mind that due to the large teacher shortage within the province, not all leaves of absence will be granted. Be sure to explain your reasons for making the request carefully. ESTA should be cc'ed on all requests.

### **Calendar votes**

Drafts of next years calendars are almost ready. Sometime in the coming week or two, you will receive drafts of the calendars, to vote yes or no on. If you vote no, you will be asked why, as this will help correct any problems. The vote will take place online.

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### **ESTA Scholarship deadline**

The May 1<sup>st</sup> deadline will be extended depending on what happens with the rest of the school year. The ESTA Executive hopes to allow students two weeks of being back at school before the deadline for applications. However, this could be adjusted depending on the situation at the time.

### **Payroll questions**

All payroll questions should be sent to your school or center administrator. They are receiving regular updates from HR. HR do not have the personnel to answer each person's individual questions. Please be patient in waiting for responses. For the period of March 16-27, 2020 all teachers will be paid whatever they were scheduled to work.

### **Negotiations**

Intersectorial negotiations are still taking place, this is basically salary. Our collective agreement will still expire on March 31, 2020. Keep your eyes out for more information.

### **Travel**

If at this point in time you choose to travel outside the country, upon your return you **MUST** self-isolate for 14 days. You will not be paid for those 14 days, because knowing the risks you chose to travel anyway. It is not recommended for you to travel within Canada anymore either.

### **Communication**

You should be checking your ESSB emails at least once a day. This is how the school board and your administrator will be communicating with you. I also recommend checking the ESTA and/or QPAT websites or Facebook pages regularly for updates as well. Please keep in mind that not everything reported in the media is 100% accurate. ESTA and QPAT will only communicate official information, we will not be commenting on things that are reported in the media.

During these difficult times please take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Stay home. Stay safe. Save lives.

Best wishes,

Gillian O'Rourke-Garrett  
ESTA President