



March 30, 2020

Dear members,

As the COVID-19 crisis continues I hope that this letter finds you and your families safe and healthy. During this crisis QPAT and ESTA's number one priority will always be the well-being of our membership. I would like to take this opportunity to give you an update on various issues that will affect you. Please keep in mind that what you read in various media sources may not be 100% accurate and that you should rely on information coming from ESSB, ESTA, QPAT and the provincial government.

Learning during school closures

ESTA, QPAT, ESSB and MEES all agree on some very important points when it comes to teaching and learning while schools are closed. Not all children and parents have equal access to materials, technology and internet. Therefore, absolutely no teaching of new material should be taking place, anything provided to students should be optional and no evaluation should be taking place. ESSB are putting together a website with a variety of reinforcement activities will be made available to families. Teachers are welcome to submit suggestions to either Lisa or Sandy. Facebook is not the best way to share suggestions as anything that you personally are sharing you must ensure equal access to all your students. ESSB is discouraging teachers to use Facebook and ESTA supports that position. If you want to send anything to your students it is recommended that you use your ESSB email address. Please exercise caution with sharing your home or cellphone numbers, keep in mind that giving those out now, may invite unwanted calls upon our return to the classroom.

Negotiations

Our collective agreement expires tomorrow, March 31, 2020. As of now there has been no agreement to anything by either side. Many discussions were had at various levels last week, but unfortunately the government has changed its position a few times in the past week. The CSQ has publicly denounced their tactics. Stay tuned keep in mind the only information that you can trust completely is communications from ESTA, QPAT or the CSQ. More information will be coming at a later date.

Deadlines for staffing process

ALL April deadlines in the staffing process will be maintained. April 1 is the deadline for Leave of Absence requests, progressive retirements and sabbatical leaves. These leaves must be approved by your administrator and must be on the form on the school board website. Copies of all requests should be sent to ESTA. Please keep in mind that due to a huge teacher shortage not all leaves will be approved.

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April 15 is the deadline to submit your teaching preference to your administrator. It is your responsibility to do this, your administrator has no obligation to send you a form to fill in. Even if you are a non-tenured teacher it is still advisable to submit your preference. Either your school rep or ESTA should be copied on your request.

Obligations while not teaching

Keep in mind that you are still being paid and the school board expects that you check your ESSB email on a regular basis. You may receive requests from principals for matters relating to governing board decisions, school council decisions or SEPC requests for next year. Your participation is strictly voluntary, but keep in mind it's your chance to have your say.

Teacher evaluations

For teachers who going through the evaluation process this school year, there should be one done in March and another in May. Given the current situation only one of the two will be done. Your principal may contact you to participate in a zoom or telephone meeting with them concerning your evaluation, you have no obligation to participate. If you choose not to, your evaluation will be submitted to the board anyway, noting that you were unable to meet. The normal requirement of 3 successful evaluations to this year to get onto the Priority of Employment list, will be changed to 2, for this year only.

Mental Health and Well Being

During these difficult and stressful times, it is important to take care of not only your physical health, but your mental health as well. Keep in mind that the Starling Minds program is available to you and your immediate family, more information is on the QPAT website. The Employee Assistance Program is available to all ESSB employees, more information at www.workhealthlife.com. You can also contact your family doctor for assistance. Keep in mind that this is a very stressful situation and there is no shame in asking for help.

Please continue to follow the ESTA Facebook page and website for updates as I get them. Most importantly take care of yourself and your loved ones. We will get through this!

Stay home. Stay safe. Save lives.

Best wishes,
Gillian O'Rourke-Garrett
ESTA President