

***Report to the Annual General Assembly 2022-2023******Matt Wilson, PTU President***

It feels that we have come so far, yet still have so far to go.

This academic year was marked by the loosening of pandemic guidelines. As the government withdrew from issuing directives in the education network, teachers were left on their own to monitor their classrooms. This also led to an inconsistency in application of the existing protocols across the various school boards, particularly with regards to absences related to COVID-19. The fall was particularly difficult, as teachers were still expected to isolate while also having to use their bank of sick days to do so. Unions across the province filed grievances to contest this forced practice, and we also look ahead to the current round of provincial negotiations to try to clarify the use of leave days for isolation-related absences in the future.

In the midst of this uncertainty, we salute your resilience and strength, but are also deeply concerned with the great burden on your mental health. As the physical impacts of the pandemic are fading into the background, the psychological toll cannot be discounted.

Our work with the school board saw a return to pre-pandemic functioning, although Zoom meetings have been beneficial to be able to meet with the school board more frequently despite crowded calendars. The dozen or so committees that PTU is part of at the school-board level continue to allow us to advocate on behalf of teachers in a variety of dossiers.

One major change in 2022-2023 was a newfound focus on health and safety. Changes to the legal obligations of the employer led to the creation of two new Health and Safety representatives, and a new set of responsibilities for the school board's Health and Safety Committee. As you've seen, reporting incidents has taken on a much more central role, although the pace of implantation of these new protocols has been frustrating at times. CNESST has also taken a more active role in supporting health and safety in schools, and we participated and helped lead joint training sessions organized by QESBA and QPAT. Obviously, much work remains to be done in this area, and changing school board structures, policies and cultures is time-consuming work.

It feels that we are just getting a handle on the changes in the "new" collective agreement as we are thrust into a new round of provincial negotiations. One of our new priorities is in harmonizing the MEQ budgetary rules with the appendices in our collective agreement that provide for additional funding.

In the context of provincial negotiations, we have seen a relatively slow roll out of mobilization actions province-wide, as we do not want to add more to your already loaded plates. Nevertheless, we anticipate that the fall of 2023 will see an intensification of mobilization, as the pace of negotiations are much too slow. The government's focus is not on the priorities that teachers need most support in: class

composition and workload. Furthermore, the government's offer of a 9% salary increase over five years is laughably insulting, and the proposed modifications to our pension plan will do nothing to help retain teachers in the profession. We anticipate another difficult road ahead in the fall.

At the same time, there have been some important positive notes this year. We have been able to restart many of the subcommittees that the pandemic put on pause: being able to meet with teachers face-to-face to work on PTU dossiers has been a breath of fresh air after many years of forced Zoom meetings. In a similar vein, being able to visit teachers in schools and centres again has been greatly appreciated by us in the office, even if the conversations are sometimes difficult. We look forward to again meeting with many more school teams in the fall!

We also have been able to make important headway with the oversized class dossier, and we hope that some of the structural changes put in place will help to reduce the volume of oversized classes in the future. In the past few years, we have seen a significant reduction in oversized classes at the elementary level, and now look to tackle the behemoth that secondary scheduling creates. A parity committee with the school board has been re-established, and a new timeline will hopefully allow for solutions in a more timely fashion.

As always, I owe a debt of gratitude to the people I work with at the PTU Office. This year saw the retirement of Ann Granger after thirteen years of work on behalf of teachers, although it is so nice to have her only a phone call away when we need to pick her brain. Erica Lamothe has now joined Pasquale Machado as part of the professional staff here at PTU, and I so appreciate the team dynamic that we share and their tireless work in supporting teachers. I also want to thank our administrative staff of Sonia Dumont, Beverly Kennedy and Melissa Noel for their work in helping to keep the office running behind the scenes.

The work at PTU could also not be done without the hard work of classroom teachers. I want to thank the nine members of the Executive Committee for their work in guiding PTU policy, and for providing a teacher perspective on the reality in schools and centres. Thank you also to all of the PTU delegates for your hard work in supporting your colleagues. Above all else, a huge thank you to all teachers for your dedication and hard work this year on behalf of your students.

I hope that the summer months ahead provide you with some time to rest and enjoy some well-deserved sunshine!

All the best!

Matt Wilson  
PTU President