

Report to the Annual General Assembly 2023-2024***Matt Wilson, PTU President***

What a year this has been!

The work of PTU this year was dominated and often superseded by the most intense round of provincial negotiations in a generation. It was also marked by a tremendous reminder of the resilience of our teachers.

The year had an almost regular feeling in September: although COVID-19 has become part of our reality, this year was one without any real COVID restrictions on the education network. At the PTU office, we were able to establish the first normal routine in my five years as President. Calendars were set for the dozen committees that PTU sits at with representatives from the school board, and I was able to take on additional responsibilities with QPAT in both my role of Treasurer and as a member of the QPAT Executive. This sense of normalcy lasted about a month.

Late September saw the coordination of a Common Front march in downtown Montreal, where 100 000 public sector workers marched together to shake the government out of its stupor.

By Thanksgiving, it was clear that the government was not only ignoring our very real concerns at the negotiating table but also bringing forth demands that would be devastating to teachers. Unions across the province received historically high mandates to engage in strike action. By October 23, the union presidents of QPAT were on regular strike watch, asked to remain available each night for emergency meetings and monitoring our emails for the eventual declaration of strike notices.

The next two months were surreal. On the one hand, as we launched eight and a half days of strike action from November 6 through December 14, I felt both tremendous pride and frustration from our teachers. As I walked picket lines, demonstrations at high traffic areas and marches at both Fairview and the CPNCA offices, I had the opportunity to speak to so many teachers about your experiences in the classroom and the importance of this battle. I was constantly impressed by your commitment, devotion, and solidarity in joining these actions. On the other hand, my evenings were filled with irritation and ennui, as these manifestations of your discontent did not move the government negotiators to action. The final week before the Christmas holidays was a madcap roller coaster of emotion, ending in an early morning meeting with our negotiators after their marathon, 36-hour negotiation session.

2024 began with the scheduling and coordination of general assemblies. Ours on January 30 was a tremendous exercise of our democratic process. The teachers of PTU voted against the negotiated proposal, and I could not have been prouder of our teachers for your willingness to say that this was not enough and that you were ready to go further. Nevertheless, the majority of teacher unions approved of the proposal and an agreement-in-principle was reached. Our negotiators now continue to work on the text of the new collective agreement: we still hope to see a final version in the weeks ahead, with retroactive salary adjustments to follow.

Amid these provincial negotiations, we also opened an accelerated round of local negotiations with the school board. We hope to be able to fully harmonize our local agreement with the current provincial agreement in the fall once the provincial text is received. Negotiations with the school board continue to proceed at a good pace, and we hope to complete our work shortly.

The oversize class dossier saw a significant move this year, as we signed a settlement agreement with the school board to resolve our thirty-five grievances for 2022-2023. As part of this agreement, approximately 470 teachers in the Youth Sector saw additional payments made based on the amount of oversized class compensation they had received last year. Unfortunately, the work is slow moving on the 2023-2024 dossier, and we have just begun work on the 2024-2025 class groupings.

We have been able to relaunch many of our internal subcommittees and submitted several consultation responses to the LBPSB based on the feedback of our teachers. Being able to meet with teachers face-to-face is a blessing after many years of forced Zoom meetings. Please do not hesitate to have your PTU Delegate coordinate a visit with us: Erica, Pasquale and I greatly enjoy visiting teachers in schools and centres.

As we look ahead to 2024-2025, we also hope to replace and refresh a few of our internal presentations. We hope to move our VAR and New Teacher information sessions to the fall, and I will look to strike a union renewal committee as we enter the post-negotiation period. The strength of our union is a direct consequence of the involvement of our members, so we will continue to look for ways for our teachers or delegates to get more involved in the life of the union.

As always, I owe a debt of gratitude to the people I work with at the PTU Office. Erica Lamothe and Pasquale Machado continue to provide a tremendous dynamic as the professional staff of PTU, and I am greatly thankful for both the tireless work and emotional support they provided. I would not have made it through this year without their help, especially during the many long nights and weekends. 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, and for being patient with needing to remind me more than usual about the items on my to-do lists. I would also be remiss to not thank my family for their support and understanding in this complicated year. There were too many missed dinners and post-bedtime meetings for my liking, although my four-year-old's impersonations of his father on a Zoom call with "his teachers" provided some much-needed levity.

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 and for providing a teacher perspective on the reality in schools and centres. Thank you also to all the PTU delegates for your hard work in coordinating our mobilization actions, and for your day-to-day 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. You are a constant source of motivation for us in the PTU office, and we constantly strive to provide you with the professional standard that you deserve.

I wish all members of PTU a very well-deserved summer and look forward to continuing to work for you in 2024-2025!

Matt Wilson
PTU President