

Report to the Annual General Assembly 2024-2025
Matt Wilson, PTU President

As this academic year ends, it is remarkable how looking backwards forces us to simultaneously look ahead. My work at PTU this year was dominated by the successful completion of local negotiations and deeper involvement internally with QPAT in a variety of dossiers.

To be fair, 2024-2025 actually began on June 9 2024, with the signature of the 2023-2028 collective agreement. The immediate application of the collective agreement during the June staffing season was difficult, to say the least, particularly in trying to both fully understand and implement the new concept of full-time teachers with special status (E2s). We had hoped that the expression “building the plane while it is in the air” had died with the pandemic, but last June proved otherwise.

Armed with the text of the new provincial agreement, we saw an opportunity to accelerate our ongoing local negotiations. Our new aim became aligning our local text with both the 2020-2023 and 2023-2028 provincial agreements. As we established our regular calendar for 2024-2025 with the school board for the dozen or so committees in which PTU takes part, we also scheduled a new blitz of local negotiation meetings in September and October. Eight more negotiating sessions with the school board, and five internal meetings with the members of the PTU negotiating team, led to securing an agreement-in-principle in November.

The general assembly to ratify this agreement-in-principle gave us an opportunity to continue to modernize our democratic processes. Documents were shared in advance of the meeting and questions were received to help guide my presentation. We also made the major change of moving the voting to after the general assembly, so that a teacher’s vote did not depend on being able to attend the general assembly. Following this process, the agreement-in-principle was ratified by 92% of teachers who exercised their right to vote.

It is often said that the writing of the text of an agreement is a second negotiation, and that was certainly the feeling in the fourteen writing sessions scheduled with the school board’s representative. Although most of the text was agreed upon relatively quickly, we did need to mutually end a few sessions early as emotions rose. Nonetheless, not only were we able to complete the writing of the text in time for the signature date of April 10, but we were also able to clean up the formatting and consistency of the text significantly.

Much work was done this year behind the scenes to establish better protocol for dispute prevention and resolution (DPR). Conflict management and DPR support for teachers has become a major part of the union’s work, so I helped work on a provincial project to secure funding from the MEQ to support school boards and local unions as we look for alternative means of resolving conflict than the traditional grievances and disciplinary measures. I am also part of a board-level committee that is working on integrating these techniques into the LBPSB. Training in coaching techniques and assisted dialogue began this year, and we hope to expand this training in 2025-2026 to include in-service teachers.

We continued to work through our many internal subcommittees and working groups to understand the day-to-day realities of teachers and advocate for your true needs. We submitted several consultation responses to the LBPSB based on the feedback of our teachers. Several grievances were also filed in previously unidentified areas: we are building a much deeper technical capacity to better ensure the application of our collective agreement.

We have also been able to help share some of that newly acquired expertise with QPAT to better support other local unions.

Despite the scheduling challenges, 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.

Unfortunately, the post-negotiation period has not proven to be quiet on the provincial level. Several significant pieces of legislation have been deposited by the current government in the National Assembly in the months of March and April that, if enacted, would have significant impacts on the teaching profession. The adoption of mandatory codes of ethics for school board employees, the removal of amnesty clauses for certain disciplinary actions, the attack on our right to strike by forcing schools to render minimum services during job actions, mandatory annual evaluations and submission of lesson plans for all teachers and the complete restructuring of our provincial and local negotiation regimes are some of the current changes being considered for adoption before the end of the year. If this seems excessive, it absolutely is! Both local unions and union federations have much work to do in the months ahead in standing up for teachers against these changes.

As we look ahead to 2025-2026, we will also continue to work on making the union's work relevant for our teachers. We will shift our VAR and New Teacher information sessions to the fall, and I will be striking 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.

We will also be upgrading and modernizing much of our digital infrastructure at PTU, to both be more efficient in our work and to ensure that our digital information is as secure as possible. We will also have the opportunity to access the CSQ union management databases, which will help us streamline communications with our members. More information to come in the fall!

As always, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the people I work with at the PTU Office. Erica Lamothe and Pasquale Machado continue to form a tremendous team with me as the professional staff of PTU, and I am greatly thankful for both the tireless work and the emotional support they provide. I also want to thank our administrative staff of Sonia Dumont, Beverly Kennedy and Melissa Noel for their often-unnoticed work in keeping the office running behind the scenes. They also need to be commended for their grace in (often) reminding me about the items on our collective to-do lists.

The work at PTU could not be done without the hard work of classroom teachers. I want to thank the nine members of the Executive Committee for their diligent work this year in providing an in-service perspective on the reality in schools and centres as we make policy decisions together. Thank you also to all the PTU delegates for your hard work in supporting your colleagues. Above all else, a huge thank you to all teachers for your continued dedication and hard work this year on behalf of your students. You are a source of inspiration for us in the PTU office, and we try to continuously reflect on the importance of providing 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 2025-2026!

Matt Wilson
PTU President