

Report to the Annual General Assembly 2025-2026
Matt Wilson, PTU President

The first line of Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities* is well known: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." I feel that the rest of this opening sentence defines how this academic year felt at the PTU Office:

"...it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way..."

What a rollercoaster 2025-2026 has proven to be!

This past academic year began with the threat of financial uncertainty. In June 2025, the government announced \$570 million in budgetary cuts aimed at "optimizing" the education network without affecting direct services to students. This was clearly an oxymoronic exercise. Over the summer of 2025, intense public pressure led to a re-investment of \$540 million, but with nefarious strings attached. Obligations to limit new hiring and a cap on the total number of working hours across all employee groups were imposed on school boards, and failing to meet these obligations would see this money withdrawn. Although some of these threats were eventually loosened, the damage was already done as school boards like ours needed to find ways to reduce the overall budget while trying to provide the same educational services. Coupled with a budgetary indexation rate that was less than the negotiated salary increases for public sector workers, many important budget lines were either frozen or even reduced. The financial strain on the public education system, and the impact on teachers and their classrooms, will unfortunately be carried forward into 2026-2027.

Despite the absence of either provincial or local negotiations this year, the desired respite at the provincial level did not occur. The government continues to deposit bill after bill that increases the burden on the teaching profession and complexifies the work of the union to represent our members. In the past year alone, we have seen the imposition of a mandatory code of ethics, the removal of amnesty clauses for certain disciplinary actions, the establishment of an inquiry committee at the MEQ to receive complaints about teachers, the limiting of our right to strike by forcing schools to render minimum services during job action, mandatory evaluation of all teachers every two years beginning in the fall 2026, the softening of obligations of health and safety committees in the health and education network, the restructuring of our provincial and local negotiation regimes, and the micromanagement of syndical organizations to force better governance of unions. If you cannot keep up with all these changes, you are not alone! Even understanding the consequences these legislative changes has been a full-time job for union representatives to ensure that our members are sheltered from the effects of this storm. For PTU, my work with QPAT has never been more significant or substantial, and the pace has an early pandemic feel to it.

The most significant legislative threat is yet on the horizon. Upon her election as leader of the governing Coalition Avenir Québec, Christine Fréchette raised the spectre of applying the Charter of the French Language (which we all know more colloquially as Bill 101) to our Continuing Education sector in anglophone school boards. This would be an existential threat for our teachers, as enrollment would be drastically affected. At the time of the writing of this report in mid-May, political discussions are ongoing within both QESBA and QPAT in anticipation of the potential deposit of such legislation.

Our advocacy work with the school board continues through the multitude of committees that we sit on at the school board-level to bring teacher concerns to the forefront of the school board's attention. This year, it feels as if we are often forced to be reactive rather than proactive, as information is slow to be shared with PTU. Labour relations with the school board have been more tense and frustrating in 2025-2026, and we sometimes feel more like an afterthought or an inconvenience than true partners. We have had to file more grievances than ever before, including on issues that we feel were completely resolvable had time been set aside to properly discuss. Nevertheless, if this is the path we must walk, we are firmly committed to tirelessly advocating for our members and ensuring that your rights are maintained and respected.

Violence towards teachers continues to be a major concern and is practically a standing item on our agendas with our PTU delegates. We are starting to finally see some fruits of the work we are collectively doing: we have undertaken a multi-month review at the LBPSB Health and Safety Committee of the MEQ Guide on the Prevention of Violence towards School Personnel. We are analyzing both the LBPSB processes that are working, but digging into the ones that need improvement, and this with less resistance than I expected. Promising work is ongoing on building templates for school-level protocols addressing particular cases of violence. Local health and safety committees will also be established at each school and centre so that issues can be discussed directly by the workers who are affected by them. It is hard work and long overdue, but we are finally seeing some momentum in this area to carry into next year.

Much work has also been done on our dispute and prevention and resolution (DPR) committee. This year, we saw over one hundred LBPSB employees trained by Sam Conille on techniques to address conflict in the workplace, and to help resolve issues when they are small and before they fester. We hope to continue this work into the new year, and ingrain DPR techniques into our collective LBPSB culture. Ms. Conille will also be leading workshops at both the 2026 and 2027 QPAT Conventions, so look for registration information soon to help equip as many people as possible with these techniques and skills.

The most important and invigorating work that I get to do is to meet with teachers. Whether it be from a school visit, a formal information session on a particular subject or an informal working group on a consultation response, hearing from classroom teachers about your needs and input is central to the work of the union. This year, in addition to our traditional meetings and sessions, we also expanded our New Teacher Meet-and-Greet to an in-person event in the fall, organized a information session about the code of ethics, and struck a union renewal committee to examine how to make the union's work more tangible and effective in the day-to-day work of our members. I am excited to continue this work in 2026-2027 as we prepare for the next round of provincial mobilization in 2028.

As always, I owe an increasing debt of gratitude to the people I work with every day in the PTU office. I continue to be impressed by the passion and advocacy of Erica Lamothe and Pasquale Machado, our professional staff members who are the first-line contact points for our teachers and direct intervenors with the school board on innumerable individual cases. I also would be lost without our administrative team of Sonia Dumont, Beverly Kennedy and Melissa Noel, who work mostly behind-the-scenes to keep the PTU office running smoothly in support of our members, while also gracefully tolerating my increasing sarcasm as our work becomes more complex.

Above all else, the work of PTU would be impossible without the dedication of our teachers. I want to thank the nine elected members of the Executive Committee who commit many hours to providing a teacher perspective on LBPSB realities as we move the work of the union forward. Thank you also to our tireless PTU delegates in supporting your colleagues and being the information link for us in the union office. Finally, a huge thank you to all our teachers for your continued dedication to teaching students and building citizens of both today and tomorrow. Despite all of the complications of your work, you continue to inspire us to dig deeper to provide you with the syndical support you deserve.

I wish all of the members of PTU a well-deserved summer and I look forward to working alongside you again in 2026-2027!

Matt Wilson
PTU President