

MTS ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

YOUR UNION WORKING FOR YOU



Over the past months, MTS has heard from hundreds of members across the province about the challenges of teaching in this COVID-19 reality. This feedback has been instrumental in helping guide our advocacy and lobbying efforts with government.

Here are some of the actions we have taken on your behalf, along with some outstanding issues that we are continuing to raise with government.

Safety

MTS was successful in its call for the mandatory wearing of masks in public schools.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- reduce class sizes to help achieve the two-metres of physical distance
- hire more teachers and EAs to facilitate a reduction in class size
- provide better access to Health Links and COVID-19 testing for school staff

Consistency

MTS was successful in ensuring that teachers can now stay home when ill, without having to provide a sick note.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- mandate policies and protocols to ensure optimal safety for all staff, such as ensuring that all school divisions adhere to public health orders for conditions under which students can return to school after being ill

Achievable expectations

MTS was successful in lobbying the government to suspend Grade 12 exams for January 2021.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- review provincial report card requirements for teachers and school leaders
- suspend the requirement for teacher and support staff evaluations this year
- credit school divisions with the three non-instructional days that were taken on September 2-4, with the mandated early return to school for teachers
- permit school divisions to schedule weekly non-instructional time, up to a half-day, for schools to plan, prepare, pivot, and provide sustainable instruction and support for all students

Blended-learning

MTS will not accept a model in which teachers provide in-person and remote instruction simultaneously. In Code Orange, when temporary remote learning is offered as a choice for parents, the impact on teacher workload is intensified.

The Society is calling on school divisions to:

- discontinue the 'duplex model' (splitting one classroom into two to allow for two-metres of physical distance. This model results in one teacher being responsible for two distinct sets of learners in two locations.)
- hire more teachers and EAs
- provide increased planning time to coordinate new learning and delivery formats
- provide increased planning time for teachers who are reassigned
- provide resources and professional learning opportunities
- provide assurance that cameras required for blended-learning, will only be used for instruction purposes and not as a means of monitoring employees

Mental health

MTS continues to raise mental health and wellness as a serious concern.

The Society is calling on school divisions to:

- establish mechanisms for ongoing teacher feedback
- invest in supports to prevent teacher burn out
- provide supports for the social and emotional impacts of positive cases in a school
- set expectations and provide supports for teachers to set boundaries to maintain work/life balance
- provide clear and consistent communication of roles and expectations

Substitute teachers

There is a shortage of substitute teachers under normal circumstances, which will now be far more pronounced as teachers heed public health advice to stay home when sick.

The Society is calling on the government to:

- create a plan for recruiting and retaining substitute teachers
- establish a bank of sick days for COVID-19 related purposes, accessible to substitute teachers

When in doubt, reach out

Perhaps you are being asked to clean your classroom, move furniture or drive a child with flu-like symptoms home. Is this part of your job? When in doubt, reach out.

Contact a Staff Officer for any questions or concerns related to the issues here, or any that may arise over the coming months.

MTS Staff Officers can be reached at the numbers listed below:

Phone: (204) 888-7961 Toll Free: 1-800-262-8803

Use your voice

Speak to colleagues; speak to parents; speak to friends and neighbours (safely, of course) about the realities in your classroom. Send a letter to your MLA, the education minister and premier – describe your day, your challenges – tell them what you need to succeed.

Tell us your experience. We can use the tools at our disposal to spread the word.

Your voice is a powerful tool. Use it.