

REOPENING OF SCHOOLS— REPORT ON MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DISCUSSIONS

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The regularly scheduled calls for the Deputy Minister of Education and All Affiliate Table resumed this week after a two-week hiatus. However, the time for the call was reduced from the previously set time of 60 minutes to 30 minutes.

The following topics were discussed at this week's meeting:

Redeployment

Ministry officials explained that long-term care facilities were now looking for permanent staffing solutions. This means that they will no longer be looking for temporary or volunteer workers. They explained that the situation has sufficiently stabilized in long-term care facilities. The redeployment agreements will stay in place for as long as there are emergency orders, but they will not be seeking volunteers until further notice. If there is a need to resume voluntary redeployment, the government will advise us. The Ministry thanked the unions and all members who put their name forward for assisting in this endeavour.

Bill 197—Omnibus bill

Ministry officials reiterated the recent announcement of Bill 197, *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act* omnibus bill. We expressed great concern and frustration at the rushed and unilateral government process for this bill and at the lack of consultation with the public and stakeholders on the matters that pertain to education and health and safety. Ministry officials acknowledged our concerns and stated that they would share them with the government.

School reopening

We were informed that the government continues to work on all aspects of school reopening. Because a large part of the province is entering stage three on July 17, they are cautiously optimistic that in-person teaching may resume in September in most areas. While they acknowledged that one month is a long time in a pandemic, they also said they continue to believe that full school reopening is possible for September. The general secretaries of the education affiliate unions pressed Ministry staff on when they will make an announcement given the level of anxiety that exists right now. They confirmed that an announcement on August 4 will be made. We continued to advocate for health and safety concerns as well as for additional resources.

Professional development days at the start of the school year

We brought up the issue of professional development days at the start of the school and expressed our hope that they would provide relevant health and safety training due to COVID-19. We urged the ministry to ensure that the school boards do not conflate the health and safety time negotiated in the central agreements with COVID-19 health and safety training. They said they would consider our request.

Personal Support Worker training and practicum

We had raised concerns at an earlier meeting about the ability of students enrolled in high school Personal Support Worker programs to complete their practicum. Colleges and universities suspended practicums due to COVID-19 and we urged the Ministry to consider the same for school boards. They shared a memo (please see attached) sent to directors of education that makes it clear that practicums may continue to run in-person or virtually.