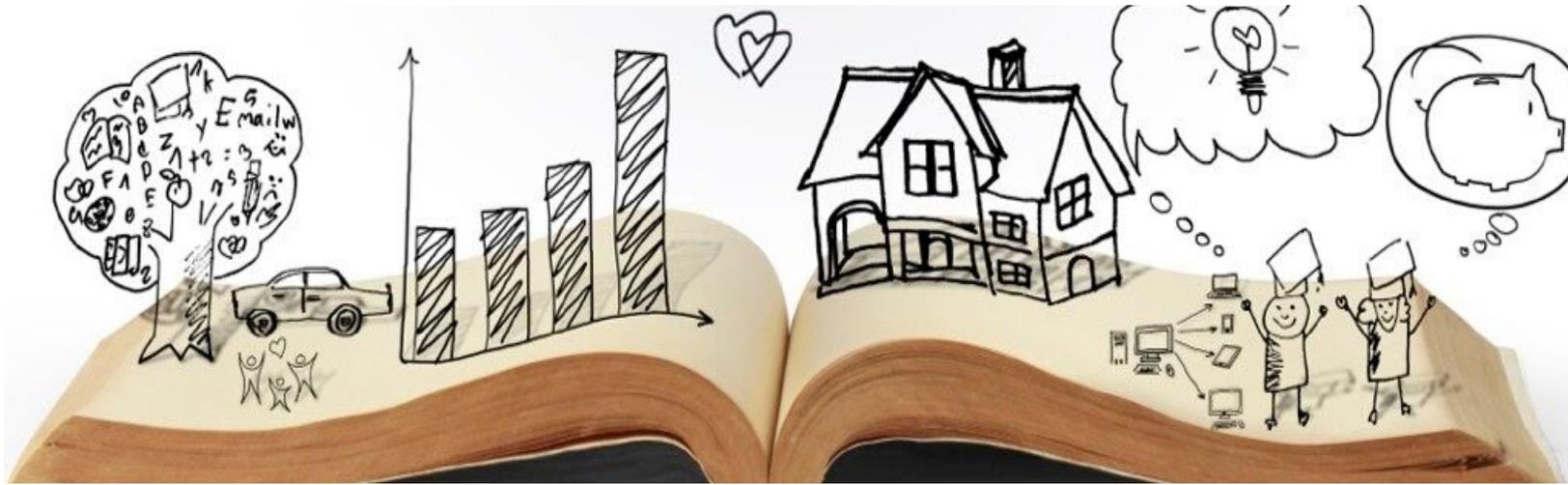
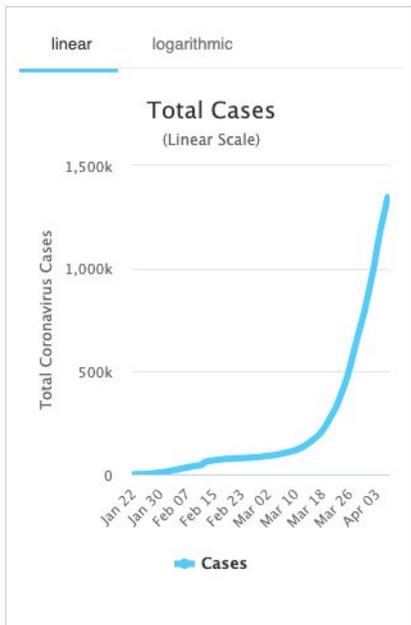


# MAPLE RIDGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



## News from the Office - April 2020

### A Word from the President...



Dorothy, we are not in Kansas anymore! This is, by far, the most unusual teaching circumstance that I have encountered in my 30 years in education! No wonder so many of us are feeling 'off kilter' and stressed right now. Very little is normal in our lives, and teaching is anything but normal. It is very important that we remember to give ourselves and each other grace as we try to navigate these uncharted waters. Our own learning trajectory is steep and mimicking that of COVID-19. We are trying to learn how to connect and provide learning opportunities to our students in a remote capacity, which is unfamiliar to many of us. This is a whole new way of teaching, and it will take time. We are also spouses, partners, parents, siblings, and children, at a time when everyone is needing extra support. There is a huge amount of pressure on us to juggle many balls. So while we are being successful at flattening the COVID-19 curve in BC, let's also try to bend our learning curve as well, even just a little. It is clear that we are in a time of modified service delivery. We are expected to support our

students by providing **continuity of learning opportunities**. We are not trying to complete the curriculum in an online format! For many students this is a completely new way of learning as well and just as stressful! Kids will not learn everything that they would learn under normal circumstances and it is not expected that they will. **And that is fine.** It is not our job to try to make up for what this Coronavirus is taking away from us. Having said that, I am extremely empathetic for our graduating

students and for their teachers. My heart goes out to you and I know you want to do your best to support your students to achieve what they need in order to graduate. Kudos.

We will continue to provide information and updates in a timely manner, through our staff reps. We will also post all memos on the homepage of our website. We are here for you and we will get through this together.

Take care,

*Penny Morgan*

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## Tentative Deal Reached! Ratification Vote on **April 28th**

The BCTF and BCPSEA have reached a tentative new deal for teachers around the province. Specific details about what is included in the new contract will be coming out shortly.

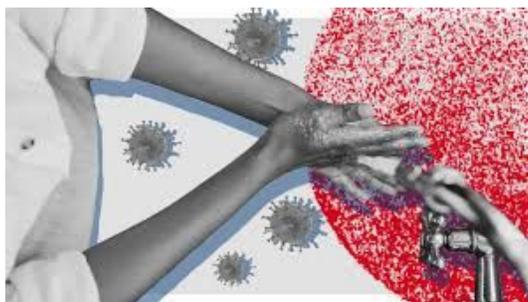
The BCTF plans to hold a ratification vote on April 28, 2020. Details about how this vote will occur are pending. The MRTA will also need to hold a ratification vote for the local contract language that was bargained during negotiations last year. This vote will occur in May, after the ratification of the new provincial agreement. Stay tuned for more information.



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### Health & Safety Tidbit **Monitor Screen Time**

Please be aware of the amount of screen time you are logging while we navigate our way through remote work. Remember to take breaks from your computer screens throughout the day. Also make sure to stand and stretch regularly. Add a daily walk outside to keep limber.



## 5 Tips to Stay Sane during the Coronavirus Pandemic

By Chona Florano

**Covid-19** is on the tip of everyone's tongue today - perhaps the pandemic is the first thought to creep into our minds in the early morning hours. How do we cope during this age of Coronavirus anxiety?

1. **Breathe** - It really helps! "Box breathing" is especially helpful, it can lower blood pressure and provide an almost immediate sense of calm. Exhale slowly to a four-count, hold your lungs empty for a four-count, inhale at the same pace for four-count, then hold air in for a four-count before exhaling. Repeat 4 times. Namaste.
2. **Laugh** - Go ahead, laugh! Laughter truly is the best medicine. It relieves tension and stress and can leave your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, our feel-good chemicals, kinda like giving yourself a BIG HUG.
3. **Perspective** - It's so easy to get lost in dark thoughts about the Coronavirus. If we just try to make a conscious effort to shift our thinking to overcome the negative, even a little, it will go a long way. You're still alive, you are surviving! Plus look at all of the random acts of kindness we are witnessing. Today is another day. Let's be grateful.
4. **Don't Distress About the News** - Turn it off. Limit yourself to one-two hours per day. Be selective as to which news outlet you use to obtain your daily dose. Don't share unless you double-check your facts.
5. **Don't Isolate** - Even while confined to our homes or in self-isolation. Stay connected with loved ones through your phone or computer. There are fun face-to-face apps like Houseparty, Whatsapp or Messenger! You're not alone in this! The world is one for the moment.

# MRTA ELECTIONS

## Memo: Interim Elections

On March 2, 2020, members received notification of interim elections for President, First Vice President and Second Vice President. These elections were for positions for the balance of the 2019/20 school year. These interim elections were to take place at the MRTA General Meeting on April 15, 2020. At this time, gatherings of 50 people or more have been banned to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.



After much discussion at the April 1st MRTA Executive meeting, the following motion was passed:

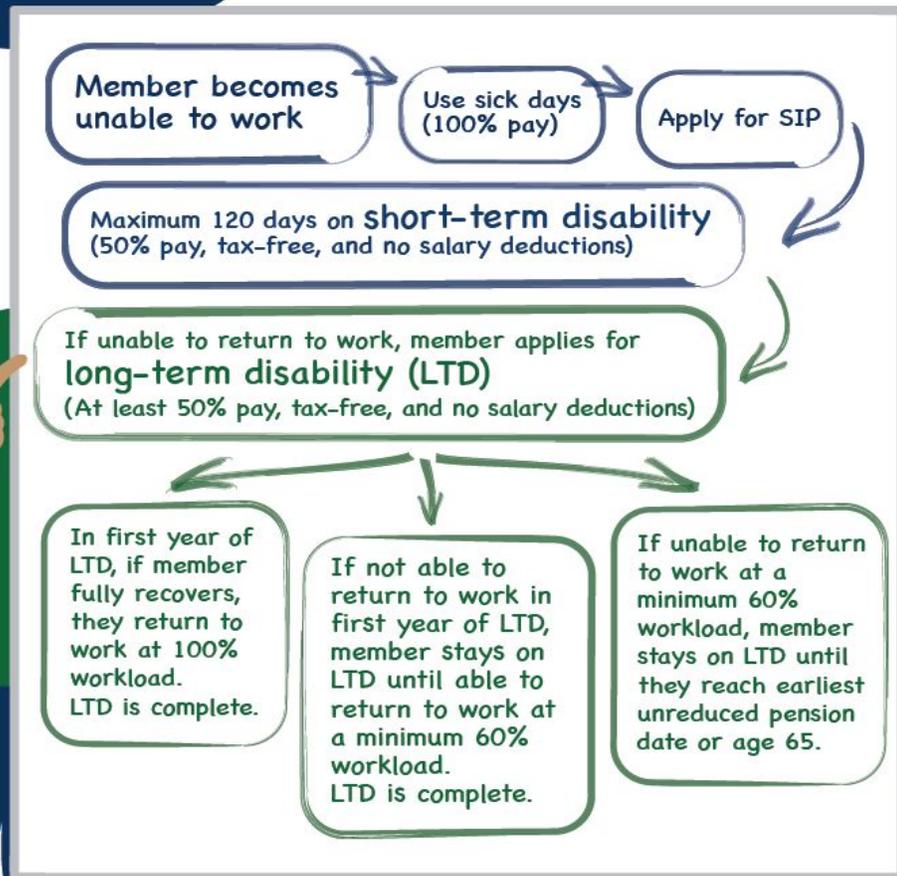
“MRTA Executive Council recommends that, in these extraordinary circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, executive positions be extended until it is deemed safe to hold a general meeting by the Provincial Health Officer.” (Morgan/Doran-Eddy)

Therefore, Penny Morgan will remain in her role as President, Kaitlin Thorarinson will remain in her role as First Vice President, and Trevor Takasaki will remain in his role as Second Vice President.

The MRTA Executive Council wants to assure members that the above motion is meant to maintain consistency in the MRTA office while we navigate through this unprecedented time. It is the intention of the MRTA Executive Council to hold elections for MRTA President, First Vice President, and/or Local Rep for the 2020/21 school year when it is deemed safe by the Provincial Health Officer. At this point, there is no timeline on when this may occur but we are committed to maintaining transparency throughout this process. There will be future communications regarding the MRTA General Meeting in the coming weeks as more information on how to proceed with local elections comes from the BCTF.

# What if you get sick?

**BCTF MEMBERS** with a contract participate in the Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP) with contributions of 1.87% from each paycheque. This plan provides both short- and long-term benefits to members who, because of illness or injury, are disabled from working and have exhausted all of their sick leave. If the illness or injury is work-related, a Workers Compensation Board (WCB) claim must be initiated.



There are more details than can be provided in this flowchart. Please contact your local union office or the BCTF with questions specific to your situation.

If you are close to your earliest unreduced pension date and have enough sick leave accumulated in your sick bank to provide you with an income until six months prior to your retirement, you may want to investigate withdrawing from the long-term section of the plan. This will save you 1.36% in SIP contributions from your paycheque. Contact your local union office for guidance:

[bctf.ca/LocalWebsites](http://bctf.ca/LocalWebsites)



Originally published in the March 2020 edition of the BC Teachers' Federation's Teacher magazine. ©

# Get to Know the Contract

Each month, the MRTA will be featuring a part of the Collective Agreement that may be useful to members around the District. This month's featured section of the Collective Agreement is regarding Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP) Allowance.

The BCTF SIP is an employee-pay-all disability plan. This means that the plan is funded by BCTF member contributions. The BCTF SIP contracts the Great-West Life Assurance Company (GWL) to adjudicate claims medically and to make long-term benefit payments.



## Article B.6 - Salary Indemnity Plan Allowance (p. 25)

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The Salary Indemnity Plan provides pay for you if you are unable to work due to illness or a medical condition when you have run out of sick days. If you are off work and only have 20 sick days or less, call us so that we can give you an application package and guide you in what to do to get SIP started. The plan provides you with a percentage of your salary, tax-free. This equates to about 95% of your take home salary.

For more information on SIP, please feel welcome to contact Penny Morgan [penny@mrtaoffice.ca](mailto:penny@mrtaoffice.ca) or Kaitlin Thorarinson [kaitlin@mrtaoffice.ca](mailto:kaitlin@mrtaoffice.ca) at the MRTA office.

