MTU Maternity & Parental Leave Guide

For members of the Mission Teachers' Union (MTU)

How to Use This Guide

This guide is here to support you through one of the most exciting and important transitions of your life—becoming a parent while working as a teacher. Whether you are pregnant, adopting, or preparing to support a new child, this resource provides step-by-step explanations, timelines, and frequently asked questions based on your Collective Agreement and relevant legislation.

You'll find help with applying for maternity and parental leave, understanding your benefits, and protecting your pension. If you're unsure about where to start or have a specific situation, you can also reach out to the MTU Office—we're here to walk with you every step of the way.

Section 1: Overview

If you're expecting a child or planning to adopt, the Collective Agreement and provincial legislation provide you with the right to take maternity, parental, and/or parenthood leave. This guide walks you through your options, rights, and responsibilities under:

- **Article G.22** Maternity Leave
- **Article G.23** Parenthood Leave
- **Article G.24** Paternity Leave
- **Service Canada** (EI Maternity and Parental Benefits)

Section 2: Maternity Leave

Short-Term Maternity Leave (Article G.22.1)

- A pregnant teacher **shall be granted** leave upon request.
- Follows the **Employment Standards Act** (up to 17 weeks leave).
- Upon application, the **Board must notify you** of your rights under both the CA and legislation.

Extended Maternity Leave (Article G.22.2)

- After short-term leave, teachers may extend leave **up to 20 school months**.
- Must apply **4 weeks prior to a term/semester start** or by **May 31** if returning after June 30.
- Return must coincide with **term/semester start**. This is not consistent with the law currently. So we can work with this. For example, you may ease back in by TTOCing for a week or two! But full time pay and benefits begin when you choose to return.
- Provide **6 weeks' notice**, or by **March 31** for June 30 returns.

Early Return / Emergency (Article G.22.4)

- Early return allowed in special cases (e.g., incomplete pregnancy, death of child).
- Requires **written request and medical certificate**.

Use of Sick Leave (Article G.22.3)

- If unable to return due to illness, provide a **medical certificate** to access sick leave.
- In case of communicable disease risk during pregnancy:
    - The Board will **reassign you**, or
    - Allow leave using **TTOC cost or your sick leave bank**.

Extended Maternity Leave Benefits (Article G.22.5)

- **First 10 months**: The Board pays its share of benefits if you pay your share.
- **After 10 months**: You can choose to pay **full cost** to continue benefits.

Assignment Upon Return (Article G.22.8)

- Return from **short-term**: same position.
- Return from **extended leave**: comparable position.
- You may apply to a new position as per Article E.22.

Section 3: Parenthood Leave (Article G.23)

- Available to any teacher with a **dependent child**, including adoptive or legal guardianship.
- Leave is **without pay**.

- Max duration: **20 school months** or until the start of a term/semester.
- Must apply **6 weeks before the end of the preceding term** or by **March 31** for September leaves.
- Follows many of the same rules as maternity leave (see G.22 cross-references).

Section 4: Paternity Leave (Article G.24)

- Up to **2 paid days** upon the birth or adoption of a child.
- Up to **5 additional days (TTOC cost)** if complications arise (e.g. cesarean).

Section 5: EI Maternity & Parental Benefits (Service Canada)

Maternity Benefits

- **Eligibility**: 600 insured hours in the past year.
- **Apply after last work day**.
- **Up to 15 weeks paid** at **55% of weekly earnings** (max ~$695/week).
- Leave can begin **12 weeks before due date**, must end **17 weeks after**.

Steps to Apply:

1. Get your **Record of Employment (ROE)** from the District.
2. Gather your **SIN and ID**.
3. Apply online at Service Canada
4. Apply **as soon as you stop working**.

Parental Benefits

- Can be claimed **after maternity or independently**.
- Options:
    - **Standard**: 35 weeks at 55% pay
    - **Extended**: 61 weeks at 33% pay
- Must choose **one option** per family.

How to Receive Maternity Leave Top-Up

To receive the 17-week top-up (2 weeks at 100% and 15 weeks at partial top-up), you **must**:

- **Apply for EI Maternity Benefits**
  - Start your application as soon as you stop working (even if your Record of Employment hasn't been submitted yet).
  - Choose "Maternity" (not just "Parental") when applying.
- **Submit Proof of EI to the Employer**
  - Once approved, you'll receive an *EI Benefit Confirmation Letter*.
  - You **must submit this confirmation letter to HR** (typically via the District Office or your HR rep) to activate the top-up payments.
  - Some districts may also require a written request or form — check with HR or the union office to confirm.
- **Coordinate Dates with Your Board**
  - Your top-up only applies during the **first 17 weeks** of your maternity leave.
  - If your leave begins earlier than your baby's due date, or you delay your EI application, this can affect the timing of your payments — plan accordingly.
- **Follow Up!**
  - If you don't see top-up payments on your pay stub within 4–6 weeks of submitting your EI letter, **contact HR and the Union Office** for support.

Section 6: Adoption Leave (G.22.7, G.23)

- All maternity/parenthood provisions apply.
- Leave starts on **child's arrival date**.
- **2 paid days** for interviews/travel; more at **Superintendent's discretion**.

Section 7: Key Contacts

- **MTU Office**: 604-826-0112 | mtu@missionteachersunion.com
- **SD75 HR (Board Office)**: 604-826-6286
- **Service Canada EI Website**: EI Maternity/Parental Benefits

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Section 8: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: When should I tell the Board I'm pregnant?
A: As early as you're comfortable, but at minimum, allow time for arranging your short-term and (if needed) extended leave. Six weeks' notice is standard.

Q: Can I stay on my benefit plan during leave?
A: Yes. For the first 10 months of extended leave, the Board will pay its share if you pay yours.

Q: What happens if I go into labour early?
A: Apply for EI immediately, and the short-term leave will begin from your last day worked.

Q: Can both parents take parental leave?
A: Yes, but you must **share** the parental weeks and **choose the same option** (standard or extended).

Q: Do I have to return to the same position?
A: Yes, if returning from short-term leave within the same year. For extended leave, a comparable position will be offered.

Q: What if I'm not ready to return?
A: You may apply for parenthood leave or use sick leave (with medical documentation).

For additional questions or support, contact the MTU office—we're here to help you navigate this important time.

Section 9: Buying Back Your Leave for Pension Purposes

During unpaid maternity or parental leave, you are not earning pensionable service unless you buy back that time. Doing so can increase your pension amount and possibly help you retire earlier.

Why buy it back?

- Increases your years of pensionable service, which directly impacts your future pension.
- Preserves your retirement timeline and financial security.
- Your employer (the district) also pays their share of the cost — this is a shared investment.

How to do it:

- Submit a "Purchase of Service Application" through the BC Teachers' Pension Plan.

- You can apply within **five years** of your leave.
- You may choose to make **continuous contributions** during leave or pay a **lump sum** after returning.
- The cost is based on your salary and contribution rates at the time of purchase; so the sooner the better because your salary will likely increase over time making the buy back price increase as well.

Smart ways to pay for it:

- Use RRSP funds to pay the lump sum — tax efficient and practical.
- Set up a small monthly RRSP as soon as baby arrives and use the accumulated funds to buy back your leave before the deadline.
- Use your tax refund or child benefit payments as part of a buy-back savings plan.

For more info, visit Teachers' Pension Plan – Buying Service

📂 Before Leave Begins

- **Review your leave options and contact the MTU Office with questions**
    - MTU Office: 604-826-0112
    - mtu@missionteachersunion.com
- **Notify the Board and HR in writing of your expected due date or placement date**
- **Let the Board know your intended start date for maternity/parenthood leave**
- Apply for Short-Term Maternity Leave (Article G.22.1)
- Decide if you want to extend your leave up to 20 school months (Article G.22.2)
- **Contact Service Canada to confirm your EI eligibility and application window**
- Apply for EI Maternity Benefits through Service Canada ***having this ready to go before the baby's born, will make it easier for you or your partner to deal with afterwards!

- Ask HR about continuing your benefits during leave (Board covers its share for up to 10 months)
- Consider applying for Parenthood Leave (Article G.23) if you need additional unpaid time
- Start thinking about how you'll handle pension contributions (pay during leave or buy back later)

During Leave *(We suggest tapping a partner to help with some/all of these tasks if you can! You have a baby to love and care for!)*

- Decide if you want to contribute to your pension during leave
- Contact TPP to discuss continuous contributions vs. buying back later Teachers' Pension Plan - Teachers - Teachers or contact the BCTF via the website: TPP resources and contacts or call the BCTF at 604) 871-2283 and ask for the pensions department
- Submit necessary forms if choosing to contribute during leave
- Confirm that your ROE (Record of Employment) was submitted
- Follow up with the Board's HR department if not processed promptly
- **Submit your EI Benefit Confirmation Letter to HR to activate maternity top-up payments**
- Apply for Parental Benefits (if not already done with maternity)
- Choose one:
  - Standard (35 weeks @ 55%)
  - Extended (61 weeks @ 33%)
- Keep your benefits active (if continuing past 10 months, you may need to pay the full premium)
- Watch for billing info from the District
- Set up a savings plan to prepare for pension buy-back or Open an RRSP or designate existing RRSP for future buy-back or Consider automated monthly deposits from child benefits or other income
- Track your EI pay and communications
- Keep a file or folder (digital or physical) for everything: EI statements, Board letters, benefit receipts, etc.
- Reach out if things change
  - Contact the MTU Office if circumstances shift (e.g., early birth, medical complications, reassignment concerns)

Before Returning to Work

- **Notify the Board in writing at least 6 weeks before your return date**
  - If your return is after June 30, notify HR by **March 31**

    - Confirm return aligns with start of a term or semester **if** you are returning from extended leave. Your return date from a year long mat leave does not have to coincide with term or semester starts.
- **Confirm your teaching assignment**
    - If returning from short-term leave: return to **same position**
    - If returning from extended leave: return to a **comparable position**
    - If you'd like to apply for a different position, review Article E.22 (Vacancy Procedures)
- **Apply to buy back your leave with the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP)**
    - Submit your application through the Purchase of Service process
    - Complete all employer/employee sections of the form
- **Choose a payment method for pension buy-back:**
    - Lump sum from savings or RRSP
    - Monthly installments
    - Combination of both
- **Reconnect with the MTU or HR to confirm reactivation of benefits, pay schedule, and assignment details**
- **Organize childcare, transportation, and transition planning for your family schedule**