



Going on Maternity Leave... What You Need to Know

Under the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements, teachers are required to request maternity leave from the school board at least four months before their expected delivery date. **Birth mothers can access paid sick leave for a reasonable recovery period (generally six weeks) following delivery for recuperation from childbirth.** The only prerequisites for this are a doctor's note and the teacher must have sufficient sick leave available to her. It is recommended that teachers advise the school board in advance that they plan to access paid sick leave for a reasonable recovery period following delivery and that a doctor's note will be provided. NLTA has developed a sample letter for maternity leave requests, a copy of which follows this article. A doctor's note for post-delivery sick leave should be provided after the baby is born. Teachers not accessing paid sick leave following delivery should just request maternity leave to commence immediately after the birth.

Maternity leave is unpaid leave from the employer's perspective, but teachers who qualify may be entitled to Employment Insurance maternity and parental benefits. The Record of Employment is completed by the school board and will state the teacher's last paid day - entitlement to Employment Insurance benefits would start after that date. Teachers who access paid sick leave immediately prior to commencing maternity leave should, when applying for EI benefits, make sure to indicate that they are coming off a period of paid sick leave as Service Canada will often waive the waiting period. **It is important to understand that accessing paid sick leave after delivery does not extend the length of time a teacher has to claim the 50 available weeks of EI benefits (or 76 in the case of those taking the extended benefits option).** These benefits (15 weeks maternity and 35 weeks parental (or 61 extended)) must all be claimed during the 52 week period (or 78 extended) immediately following the date of the baby's birth. So, including the waiting period, a teacher who takes six weeks of paid sick leave following delivery would, in a sense, give up approximately five weeks of EI benefits during that same period. However, paid sick leave is with full salary and benefits. (Please note: paid sick leave cannot be accessed for any reason during the non-teaching periods - i.e. summer, Christmas, Easter. For example, a teacher who gives birth on July 1 should just file for EI benefits right away.)

Whether or not a teacher accesses paid sick leave *following* delivery has no impact on her ability to access paid sick leave, if necessary, *prior* to delivery. If a teacher must, for health reasons, stop working a few weeks before the baby is born, take some time for medical appointments, etc., this would not impact on her entitlement to paid sick leave for a reasonable recovery period after delivery as long as, of course, the teacher has sufficient sick leave available.

Some other things to remember while on maternity leave include making arrangements with Johnson Inc. for payment of group insurance premiums through an automatic bank debit. The government will continue to pay its share of teachers' premiums during periods of maternity leave. Teachers who do not pay their premiums while on maternity leave will be deemed to have opted out of the group plan and may have to apply and provide medical proof of insurability to resume coverage. Teachers with single coverage under the health plan who wish to switch to family coverage upon the birth of a child must contact Johnson Inc. within thirty-one (31) days of the date of birth to be able to make this change without having to provide medical proof of insurability. Teachers on maternity leave also need to pay NLTA fees during the period of leave. NLTA fees for teachers on unpaid leave, including maternity leave, are only \$5 per month and most people choose to pay the full amount up front. To arrange for payment of NLTA dues during a period of maternity leave, teachers should contact the Accountant/Assistant, Corporate Services at the NLTA office.

Upon returning to work from a period of maternity leave, teachers should make arrangements to buy back their time on unpaid leave to have it count for pensionable service in the Teachers' Pension Plan. Arrangements should be made to start this process within 180 days of returning to work as the cost will increase drastically after that point in time.

This may seem like a lot of information to digest at a very busy and exciting time in your life, so please refer to the following checklist to make sure you don't forget anything:

Maternity Leave “to do” Checklist

- **Request Leave from Employer** - submit a written request for maternity leave to your school board at least four months in advance of your expected delivery date. It is your option to access paid sick leave for a reasonable recovery period following delivery if you have enough sick leave available to you. If you are not sure how much time you want to take off, state the earliest date you would return in your letter and indicate that you will give the board reasonable notice if you decide to extend your leave. The letter should be addressed to the regional Director of Human Resources and copied to your school principal. See sample letter provided.
- **Obtain Medical Note from Doctor** - once you have had your baby, if you are accessing paid sick leave following delivery, see your doctor and request a medical note putting you off work for recovery from childbirth. Submit the note to your school board and send a copy to your principal.
- **Request Record of Employment (ROE) from Employer** - when you are nearing the end of your recovery period (sick leave), or right after the birth if you are not accessing post-delivery sick leave, contact your school board to request your ROE, which you will need for filing an EI claim.
- **Submit your Application for EI Benefits** - if applicable, make sure to indicate that you have just finished a period of paid sick leave and want to have this counted as your EI waiting period.
- **Contact Johnson Inc.** - to arrange for continued payment of your group insurance premiums, you will need to supply banking information. To switch to family coverage, if necessary, you must do so within 31 days of the date of birth. Telephone (709) 737-1528 or 1-800-563-1528.
- **Contact the NLTA** - to arrange for payment of your Association dues during your leave call (709) 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 extension 236 to reach Rita Tee.
- **Relax and enjoy time with your new baby!**
- **Contact the Teachers’ Pension Plan Corporation (TPPC)** - you have 180 days after your return to work to contact the TPPC to make arrangements to buy back your period of leave for pensionable service. If you wait longer than 180 days, the cost of purchasing the time will increase significantly. You can contact the TPPC, providing your name, SIN and mailing address, at memberservices@tppcnl.ca or via fax at (709) 793-4055.

If at any time you need clarification, have other questions, etc., please do not hesitate to contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services.

Note: In the event of a discrepancy between this Information Sheet and the Group Insurance Master Policy, the terms of the Group Master Policy will apply.

Sample Maternity Leave Request Letter

[Street Address]
[City], [Province]
[Postal Code]
[Date]

[Name]
Director of Human Resources
[School District Address]

Dear [Name]:

I am writing to request maternity leave as per Article 17 of the Provincial Collective Agreement/Article 28 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement. My expected date of delivery is [Date] [and I am anticipating accessing paid sick leave, if necessary, for a period of time from my delivery date until I am medically cleared to return to work. A medical note will be provided for this period].

From that point, I am requesting maternity leave, with an expected return to work on [Date]. [If I decide to extend my maternity leave beyond this date, I will provide reasonable notice of same.]

Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[School]

Copy to: [School principal]