

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES**1. QUESTION:**

What policies does McGill have to ensure that working at McGill in time of COVID, whether on-campus or remotely, does not put disproportionate burden on parents, families, and women? Are the directives to mandate support for single parents; or are we relying on goodwill and discretionary accommodations? Are there plans for more paid leave or more Family assist days to help some of our most burdened workers? During this time of the pandemic, parenting is harder than normal; it's harder yet for single parents; and the challenges are disproportionately affecting our women workers. Children may need home schooling, whether due to temporary school closures or temporary quarantines or on a long-term basis for health concerns; at the same time, parents are expected to continue working full-time, not always remotely. Many childcare options are no longer available: grandparents who formerly provided key support can no longer do so due to health risks associated with their age; and hiring casual babysitters is too expensive, if and when it is even safe or permissible.

RESPONSE:

Among McGill's guiding principles for this exceptional time are the continued respect for public directives and the health and safety of our students and staff. The University actively monitors public directives as they evolve and adapts its practices accordingly.

Ministry of Higher Education directives to universities, including those in relation to employees with additional pandemic-induced family care obligations that conflict with their ability to fulfill their contractual work responsibilities, have evolved throughout the pandemic, and McGill has taken care to ensure that our practices remain aligned with those directives. Current government directives require that employees first demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable measures to ensure alternate care for the family member in need. Following that, employers are instructed to evaluate the possibility of allowing the employee to work remotely, if that is not already the case. After these steps, if the employee is still not able to fully perform their work duties, government directives instruct employees to use family/parental leave or other types of leave for which they qualify. McGill's current policies are aligned with these directives, and the University does not presently plan to expand our paid leave options.

Compared to other employers, McGill offers employees generous leave policies – one of the reasons for which McGill has consistently been ranked among [Montreal's top employers](#) for over a

decade. In addition to vacation time, most employees benefit from full Summer Fridays, paid leave during the winter holiday closure, Family Days and personal days. McGill also offers a [variety of other leaves](#) and flexibility including Flexible Work Arrangements, Temporary Alternate Work Agreements, and Leave of Absence.

In recent years, both before and since the pandemic began, the University has systematically undertaken the initiative to introduce several policies and programs to support employees in balancing work and personal responsibilities. Senior management has clearly and repeatedly [directed supervisors](#) that they must be sensitive and flexible in dealing with employees' requests under the current circumstances. Where possible, they are expected to allow for childcare, to be supportive and to carefully consider employees' requests for accommodation. To that effect, Human Resources provided training and reference material to all HR Advisors on this topic. Guidance has also been provided to supervisors on how to deal with sensitive situations including those involving young children. After speaking with their supervisor, if employees would like to further explore the options and resources available to them, they are welcome to reach out to their local HR representatives.

In complement, the federal government offers the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) that provides income support to individuals who are unable to work because they must care for their child under 12 years old or for a family member who needs supervised care. This applies if their school, regular program or facility is closed or unavailable to them due to COVID-19, or because they are sick, self-isolating, or at risk of serious health complications due to COVID-19. Details can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/benefits/recovery-caregiving-benefit.html>

1a. Follow-up Question:

As is clear from your response, McGill is not currently rising above the bare minimum required by the Quebec Labour code and what our Collective Agreement entitles us. There are no policies or measures currently in place to address the inequity of the disproportionately negatively affected mothers or single parent households while working at McGill a year into the global pandemic. Are there any thoughts to applying the Gender-based analysis plus when creating future policies or procedures at McGill to avoid this type of future inequity?

Response from the Chair of the Board of Governors:

The Board's role in respect of HR policies affecting MUNACA is limited. The Board has delegated to its Human Resources Committee the authority to approve mandates for the negotiation of collective agreements. As such, any policies impacting MUNACA and its

members would be considered in the context of the negotiations process involving the HR unit. This process does not involve the Board nor its HR Committee.

Response from the Associate Vice-Principal (Human Resources), Diana Dutton:

I agree that this is not the forum to answer this specific question. However, I would like to make the following comments:

First, as stated in the response provided to Ms. Yee initially, McGill's leaves policies, including vacation, whether for our unionized or non-unionized staff, far exceed the minimum provisions of the Quebec Labour Standards Act, and indeed, the working conditions offered by many other Quebec employers. These policies are there to support the work life balance of all our employees.

As regards gender equity, this is a priority for the University, and HR is working closely with McGill's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team to implement the University's EDI strategic plan.