

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Craig Smith, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: November 3, 2023
Regarding: **TVDSB Inclement Weather/Emergency School Closure Learning Days**

Earlier this school year, The Thames Valley District School Board issued directions to Teachers requiring them to maintain an updated digital platform so that students may engage in “remote learning” during any period of absence.

The Union considers this to be a violation of the statutory freeze on working conditions that is required under Section 86 of the Ontario Labour Relations Act when an expired Collective Agreement is being renegotiated.

The Board maintains that use of digital platform is a “well-established practice” that has been in effect since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore does not constitute a “change” in your working conditions.

While it is true that Teachers were required to engage in virtual teaching during the pandemic, this was a temporary measure that was introduced as an emergency response to an unprecedented public health crisis and undertaken without prejudice and precedent. The employer’s claim that this constitutes “past practice” is nothing short of an attempt to use the COVID-19 crisis to change your working conditions in perpetuity.

The use of digital platforms to sustain learning throughout the pandemic demonstrated significant goodwill on the part of Teachers to support students and families. We are beyond disappointed that the employer would use this example of Teachers’ commitment and dedication to students and families during the pandemic to attempt to permanently erode your professional judgement.

More recently, you received a memo from the school board advising Teachers and staff to be prepared to deliver virtual instruction in the event of school closures resulting from inclement weather. This, too, constitutes a violation of the statutory freeze imposed during bargaining.

In response to these violations, the Union has initiated a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board to seek remedy for Teachers. We hope that this matter will be resolved soon.

Teachers know what is best for their students and our Members routinely exercise their professional judgement when determining how best to deliver the Ontario curriculum. This has not changed, and Teachers are advised to continue exercising this professional judgement as per the Collective Agreement.

Teachers requiring further support, assistance, or more information regarding this **Communiqué** are advised to contact the Local office by email at efotvtl@efothamesvalley.com or by phone at (519-474-3150).

*c/ Released Executive, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local
Terry Card, President, ETFO Thames Valley Occasional Teacher Local
Jamie Thom, ETFO Provincial CB Staff Officer*

“The collective agreement is the rule book, not a guidebook.”