



ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local

Volume 12, Number 1, December 19, 2024

Colleagues and Friends,

Season's Greetings to all Members of the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local.

So far, the 2024/2025 school year has been as challenging and as it has been rewarding.

Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, on behalf of all students in your care and in support of public education in Ontario. Your professionalism and hard work make a real difference, are acknowledged, and are very much appreciated.

For yourselves and your families, I hope that you find time over the holidays to rest, to reflect, and to recharge.

The ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local continues to fight the good fight on your behalf.

Best wishes to you and yours. Enjoy a well-deserved Winter Break and a Happy New Year.

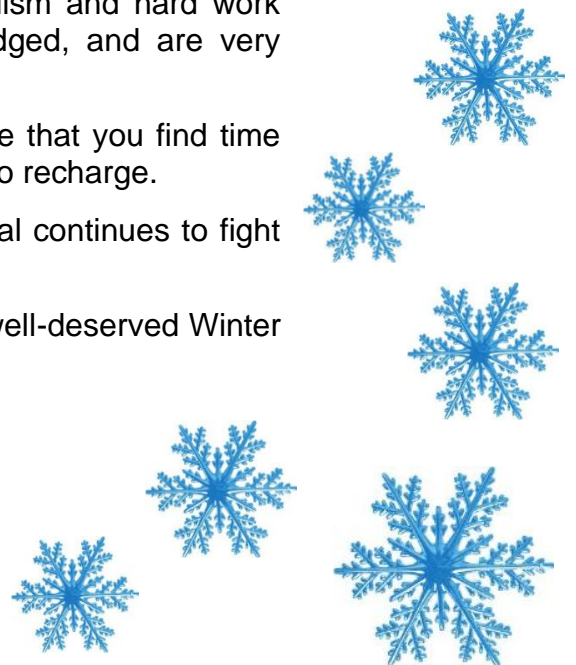
In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "CS", written over a white background.

Craig Smith, President



Craig Smith, President



Collective Bargaining

Your Collective Agreement outlines the terms of your employment with the Thames Valley District School Board.

The final version of the 2022 – 2026 Collective Agreement is posted to the Board's website and the ETFO TVTL Website.

It is important for all Members to recognize that your current Executive believes strongly in the collective voice of the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local and that Local Bargaining Matters. For more information, please contact the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local.

Mark MacLeod, Chief Negotiator / Grievance Officer

Grievance and Arbitration

The Collective Agreement is a rulebook, not a guidebook. The employer has a legal obligation to follow the provisions found within our Collective Agreement. Members are reminded to honour the Collective Agreement by adhering to the duly negotiated and ratified provisions contained within it.

Since the end of the school year, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local has filed a number of grievances. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, Digital Platforms, Staffing, Classroom Changes and Abuse of Management Rights.

All ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members are reminded to contact the Local if they believe their rights and entitlements found within the Collective Agreement have been violated.

Mark MacLeod, Chief Negotiator / Grievance Officer

How to Prepare for a Safe Winter Road Trip



Winter road trips offer breathtaking scenery, but conditions can sometimes be less than perfect. According to the National Collision Database, nearly 30 percent of collisions happen on wet, snowy, or icy roads in November, December, January, and February.

Read more at www.otip.com/article188. #OTIPUpdate



Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) Workshops

TPA Workshops for New Teachers and Experienced Teachers were presented in the Local office this fall. The workshops explained the process and the rights and responsibility of the Teacher and the Assessor under our Collective Agreement and the Ministry Technical Requirements Manual.

The power points from the workshops are posted on the Local Website under Resources – Workshops.

Notification of TPA must occur on or before October 10. If you were advised after that date, please call Jennifer Hillner at the Local office.

If you have TPA questions, please reach out to Jennifer Hillner at the Local.

Jennifer Hillner, Vice President

Pregnancy/Parental Leave

A Pregnancy/Parental Leave Workshop was presented at the Local office on October 23. This workshop is designed to help Members understand the process for accessing Pregnancy/Parental/Adoption leave. It was great to meet new Members and answer questions relating to these types of leaves. The materials are posted on the Local Website under Resources – Workshops. Please take a look or call Jennifer Hillner at the Local office if you have any questions.

Another workshop is scheduled in the spring. Registration details will come out in the new year.

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local would like to congratulate our Members on the arrival of their babies. After your baby's arrival please email the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local with your mailing address and the date of your baby's arrival to receive your baby welcome package.

Jennifer Hillner, Vice President

ETFO Professional Opportunities Fund

The Local offered ETFO Professional Opportunities Funds for Members again this year and they proved to be popular. There may still be funds available. Please check the website. Members have been able to access funding for expenses related to Professional Opportunities (course, conference, workshop, resources).

Self-Directed Days were the most sought after this year and registration was filled in a few minutes.

We appreciate the interest in these funds and are happy to be offering them again this year. We continue to receive feedback and consider it in our planning for the upcoming school year. Please contact Jennifer Hillner at the Local office with suggestions or questions.

Jennifer Hillner, Vice President

ETFO Personal Wellness Fund

The Personal Wellness Fund was also incredibly popular. This fund is available to reimburse personal wellness expenses for our Members (courses, conferences, workshops, resources, equipment and memberships).

We welcome feedback and suggestions related to this fund as well, as we budget for the upcoming school year. Contact Jennifer Hillner with suggestions or questions.

Jennifer Hillner, Vice President

Professional Learning

The Local hosted a Language Curriculum workshop offered through ETFO Provincial.

This workshop provided an overview of the changes to the new Language 1-8 curriculum. We were able to offer this for Primary and Junior/Intermediate groups.

Registration for this workshop filled quickly, and the feedback was very positive.

We are working on plans to offer additional workshops in 2025.

Jennifer Hillner, Vice President

Understanding Voluntary Surplus: Benefits and Risks

Voluntary Surplus is a Collective Agreement right that allows a Teacher to voluntarily surplus themselves from their current school and participate in the staffing process as a surplus Teacher. While this option can offer benefits, it also comes with certain risks that Members should carefully consider before making a decision.

One of the key benefits of Voluntary Surplus is that it guarantees a move to another school. Surplus Teachers typically require less seniority to secure interviews compared to permanent applicants. This makes Voluntary Surplus an appealing option for Teachers who are flexible with their assignments and location. For those open to new opportunities, this process can lead to new and enriching experiences in different school settings.

However, there are inherent risks tied to the availability of positions, particularly during years when population growth is stagnant or declining. In years of growth, there are more positions available, which creates more opportunities for surplus Teachers. Conversely, during years of minimal growth, fewer positions are available, and surplus placements may not align with a Teacher's preferred assignments or school location. Additionally, it's important to note that surplus placements typically occur prior to Round 3 of the staffing process, and the positions available at this stage are often limited to classroom teaching assignments.

With the outlook for Spring Staffing indicating a tighter staffing year with fewer positions available, the risks associated with Voluntary Surplus are likely more pronounced this year. Teachers considering this option should carefully weigh the potential challenges of being placed into positions that may not meet their preferences.

As always, we encourage our Members to fully understand both the benefits and risks before making any decisions. If you have questions or concerns about Voluntary Surplus, don't hesitate to reach out to your Local for further guidance and support.

Scott Hardie, Vice President

The Importance of Teachers Communicating Concerns with School Administration

Open communication between Teachers and school Administration is paramount for success in our educational environment. Teachers, as the front-line professionals in the classroom, are uniquely positioned to identify challenges, suggest improvements, and offer insight that can lead to positive change. It is essential that Teachers feel empowered to voice their concerns, knowing that their input is valued and can make a tangible difference in the school community.

First and foremost, communication is key to addressing issues before they escalate. Whether it's a concern about student behaviour, curriculum effectiveness, or working conditions, addressing small problems early can prevent them from becoming larger, more complex issues. Teachers who are comfortable discussing their concerns with the Administration can collaborate on solutions in real time, ensuring that problems are dealt with proactively. This not only enhances the classroom experience but also promotes a healthier, more productive school environment for everyone involved.

Moreover, open dialogue fosters trust and transparency. When Teachers and Administrators maintain an ongoing conversation, it builds a foundation of mutual respect and understanding. Teachers need to feel confident that their concerns are being heard and taken seriously, and Administrators need the feedback to make informed decisions. By encouraging honest communication, we create a school culture where both parties work together towards common goals, making the educational process smoother and more effective for students, Teachers, and Administrators alike.

Additionally, it is important to remember that Teachers are the ones working directly with students every day. They are the first to notice changes in academic performance, behavioural trends, and emotional well-being. When these observations are communicated to the Administration, it allows for a more coordinated response to student needs. Whether it's advocating for additional resources, requesting changes in policies, or suggesting adjustments to instructional practices, Teachers play an integral role in shaping the school's approach to student success.

Finally, the power of a unified voice cannot be underestimated. When Teachers collectively communicate their concerns, the strength of that voice is amplified. As Union members, we are all working toward the same goal: a fair and effective educational experience for our students and a positive working environment for our Members. By standing together, we ensure that our concerns are not only heard but addressed in a manner that benefits the entire school community. Let's continue to foster open, honest communication between Teachers and Administrators, ensuring that we are all moving forward together for the betterment of our schools.

Scott Hardie, Vice President

Advice to ETFO Members

Members must always be vigilant to maintain their professionalism at all times, whether dealing with students or parents. Unfortunately, we can find ourselves in situations requiring Legal Assistance due to allegations made against us to either the Police or Children's Aid Society (CAS). If you have been notified that the Police or CAS is investigating an allegation against you, contact your Federation. In addition:

- Do not participate in or consent to an interview;
- Make no statement to anyone regarding the allegation/charges;
- Say "I am willing to cooperate but I am unable to comment until I contact the Federation and legal counsel;"
- Call ETFO Professional Relations and ask to speak with the PRS Duty Officer (1-888-838-3836); state that your call is urgent.

The Local Released Office supports the parameters associated with the school Board, however, it is important that you have legal representation at these meetings with outside agencies to ensure that your rights are upheld.

It is also important to note that if you are asked by your Administration to attend a meeting at school with Union Representation, that your representation at these meetings must be from the Local office and not your Workplace Steward. If you are asked to attend such a meeting, please contact the Local office to set up a mutually convenient time to meet (519-474-3150 – ask to speak with the Duty Officer).

Michael Thomas, First Vice President

Changes to Joint Health and Safety Committee Structure

In September, the Ministry of Labour gave notice to the Board that the Multi-Site Joint Health and Safety Committee Terms of Reference would not be renewed. The Board is transitioning to Site Based Joint Health and Safety Committees in each school building, without the system level oversight of a main committee. There are currently transition meetings going on between the Board and worker groups as we move to this new model.

The Site Based Health and Safety Committees in each school now have new responsibilities, and should be receiving additional health and safety communications and reports from the Board. For example, site committees should now receive any critical injury reports, accident and injury reports for your site that resulted in health care or lost time, violence reporting, and any occupational hygiene and testing results.

Each site will now be required to have one management member and one worker member complete Joint Health and Safety Certification Training – Parts One and Two to be in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Site committee responsibilities include having one worker member complete a workplace inspection of the entire building monthly, hold quarterly site committee meetings, and recognize, access and make suggestions for corrective and preventative controls where hazards exist. A worker member from the site joint health and safety committee must be present during critical injury investigations, work refusals, and at the beginning of any environmental testing occurring at the school. The site committee also has the power to write recommendations to management for the improvement of the health and safety of workers that management must respond to within twenty-one days.

Sue Varley, ETFO Health and Safety Officer

The Importance of Reporting Health and Safety Issues

Reporting workplace hazards, acts of violence, and worker accidents and injuries in schools is a legal duty under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Also, under the Education Act, workers are required to report all serious student incidents.

When you submit a report, the Administrator and school Board are required to investigate and deal with the concern. In Thames Valley, incidents are reported electronically through eBase, using the Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation Form (EIRIF) for incidents involving staff, and the Safe Schools Incident Report (SSIR) for situations involving students. In many instances, both forms are required and can be completed simultaneously in the on-line reporting system.

All acts of violence in schools must be reported as soon as possible after they occur, and include not only acts of physical violence, but also any threat, attempt or near miss. A worker's duty to report accidents, workplace violence, and serious student incidents cannot be limited by age, student needs, intent, or other mitigating circumstances. Incident reporting is the main tool used to track incidents, analyze trends and identify sites of concern. The data helps us to advocate for positive change by addressing concerns and implementing preventative and corrective measures to mitigate risk and maintain safe workplaces.

If you are not receiving an appropriate response or follow-up when either the EIRIF or SSIR forms are completed, or have any questions about the new site-based JHSC format, please contact the Local office.

Sue Varley, ETFO Health and Safety Officer

Rest and Recharge

Dr. Greg Wells shares 7 Tips to help you sleep soundly and recharge during the holidays. In the video he emphasizes the importance of managing your environment and routine to achieve deep, restorative sleep. Learn how to limit caffeine intake to the morning, defend the last hour before bed by avoiding screens, create a dark and cool sleep cave, prioritize getting 7-8 hours of sleep, and use natural light to wake up naturally.

Check out the link: [a video I created to walk you through 7 tips to help you sleep soundly](#)
Check out Dr. Wells' website for more wellness tips: www.drgregwells.com

Retirement

A retirement workshop was recently hosted by our Local. Another will be held in the spring. These workshops are designed to help Members understand what processes are undertaken if they plan to retire. Thank-you to everyone who participated in the first workshop this year. If, however, you did not get the opportunity to participate, the materials presented at these events are available on the new ETFO Thames Valley Local website under "Resources". Please feel free to have a look, or call the Local office and ask for Dale Napier, if you have any questions.

The new Collective Agreement language with respect to timelines for retirement is as follows:

L5.09 A Teacher may resign or retire:

- a) by providing no less than six (6) weeks' notice by submitting an official retirement or resignation letter;
- b) at any other time by submitting an official retirement or resignation letter with the mutual consent of the Teacher and the Board.

For those that are retiring, ETFO Thames Valley Teachers' Local would like to congratulate you on your career, and wish you all the best in your future endeavors. To this end, please consider joining us for our annual Retirement Banquet on Thursday May 29, 2025. Stay tuned for further details regarding this event.

Dale Napier, Vice President

LTD Termination

If you retire (as some of you may be doing this Winter Break – Congratulations) you will no longer be paying into your LTD benefit package. However, sometimes Members are eligible to stop this payment prior to their retirement date. This can occur if one of the following scenarios applies to you:

- 1) you have 30 credit years of teaching experience or
- 2) you have reached the age of 65.

If either of these scenarios applies to you, please call Dale Napier at the Local office (519-474-3150 or email dnapier@etfothamesvalley.com).

Dale Napier, Vice President

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

EFAP provides various forms of support for ETFO Members and their families including but not limited to the areas of Family, Health, Life, Money, and Work. This could take the form of Clinical Counselling, Work-Life Services or On-Line Resources. The company that provides our EFAP is called LifeWorks and is owned and operated through Telus. They can be reached by phone at 1-844-958-5105 or online at tvdsb.lifeworks.com.

Confidentiality is guaranteed within the limits of the law.

Here's hoping everyone gets a well-deserved break over the Holiday season. Please remember to look after yourself, your health and your family.

Dale Napier, Vice President

Important Year-End Financial Planning Deadlines and Tips



As the year draws to a close, it's a great time to review your financial situation and take advantage of year-end tax planning opportunities. With a little planning, you can maximize your savings, minimize your tax burden, and stay on track with your financial goals.

For a comprehensive checklist of to-dos, check out this helpful resource: <https://bit.ly/3Ors3Hf>.

ETFO Membership Profile

- All Members are requested to update their profiles (name, mailing address, personal e-mail address, and professional information) on the Local's website.
- In your account, be sure to calculate your preparation time and supervision time accurately when completing the Professional Information section.
- To access your profile, log into the Local's website (www.etfothamesvalley.com) using your ETFO membership number and password. Click on your name in the upper right corner, then select 'Edit Profile'.
- The Local has to ensure that the articles of the Collective Agreement are being adhered to and ensure that any discrepancies are addressed as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Local office.

Are you retiring in December?

If you are retiring in December, please contact Erin at the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local office or email:

etfotvtl@etfothamesvalley.com to submit your name, personal email and home address to receive an invitation to the Retiree's celebration.

25 Year Celebration

The ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local is currently planning a celebration for all ETFO Members who have completed twenty-five years of teaching as of June 30, 2024 (e.g. currently in 26th year).

If you are eligible please forward your information to the Local office on the form that was provided to Workplace Stewards.

Holiday Hours

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local office will close at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, December 20, 2024. The office will re-open on Monday, January 6, 2025 at 8:15 a.m.

Emergency assistance will be available through the ETFO Provincial office (1-888-838-3836). They will only be responding to critical legal matters.

Christmas Season Support to the Local Communities

On behalf of our Members, the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local donated \$1000.00 to each of the following organizations:

- London Food Bank
- The Salvation Army - Woodstock
- The Salvation Army - Strathroy
- The Caring Cupboard - Food Bank, St. Thomas

On behalf of our Members, the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local donated \$500.00 to each of the following organizations:

- London Abused Women's Centre
- Ingamo Family Homes
- St. Thomas-Elgin Second Stage Housing
- Women's Rural Resources Centre of Strathroy and Area

The following events are scheduled.
Advance registration will be required.
(these dates may be subject to change)

January 2025

- Workplace Stewards' Meeting - January 22
- Health and Safety Representatives' Training - January 29 and 30

February 2025

- ETFO Skate Night - February 7
- Workplace Stewards/Principals' Training - February 11 and 12
- General Meeting - February 13
- Experienced Teacher TPA Workshop - February 19

March 2025

- Retirement Planning Workshop - March 5
- Workplace Stewards' Meeting - March 19
- 25 Year Celebration - March 26

April 2025

- Pregnancy / Parental Leave Workshop - April 2
- All Candidates Session – April 8
- Local Annual Meeting - April 23

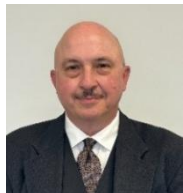
May 2025

- Workplace Stewards' Meeting - May 21
- Annual Banquet – May 29

June 2025

- Local Leaders' Appreciation - June 18

2023 – 2025 Executive



President

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ETFO Health and Safety Specialist

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Treasurer

Amy Kilty Schwandt



Recording Secretary

Marnie Meloche



Alia Awaysheh



Brent Kelders



Carla Musser



Kevin O'Neill



Jarod Parlee



Melissa Pearce



Lara Shanley



Amanda Short



Erica Stefina



Maria Vieira



Kate White



Amber Yerema

- Regular Office Hours -

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local

Monday - Thursday, 8:15 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.