

**2023 Pre-Budget Submission**

**to**

**The Standing Committee on  
Finance and Economic Affairs**

**Building Better Schools.  
Building Safer Schools.**

**February 13, 2023**



**Craig Smith, President**  
ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local  
2911 Bateman Trail  
London, Ontario N6L 0A6  
(519) 474-3150

Most people would agree that there is no place for violence in elementary schools and, when pressed on the matter, would also agree that there really is no acceptable level of violence in elementary schools. Yet here we are, facing a systemic and pervasive crisis that is characterized by an increase in the number and severity of violent acts in schools, large numbers of Teachers off work due injury and mental health issues caused by violence, and Students who are immersed and increasingly inured to the violence that surrounds them every day. Violence in schools is part of the “new” normal, and the trouble with normal is it always gets worse.

Article L2.08 (Scope and Recognition) of the Agreement between the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) and the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL) has this to say on the matter:

It is recognized that Teachers should not have to be subject to violence, threats of violence, profane or insulting statements and/or other similar conduct from staff, students and members of the community.

The above is good collective agreement language, but here is the reality of the situation in TVDSB schools:

- June 2022 there were four hundred sixty-three (463) reported acts of violence.
- September 2022 there were six hundred eighty-seven (687) reported acts of violence.
- October 2022 there were nine hundred eighty-two (982) reported acts of violence.
- November 2022 there were six hundred ninety-three (693) reported acts of violence.
- December 2022 there were four hundred ninety (490) reported acts of violence.
- January 2023 there were five hundred two (502) reported acts of violence.

On face the numbers are staggering, particularly when it is understood that the majority of violent acts in schools go unreported. A six-month average of six hundred thirty-six (636) incidents means that TVDSB is on track to report six thousand thirty-six (6360) violent incidents by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. There is simply no way to put a positive spin on these numbers, and there is no way to present them as acceptable.

The agreement between TVDSB and ETFO TVTL includes Letter of Understanding #6, Violence in Schools. It connects directly to Article L2.08 and states the following:

The Board and the Union agree to work towards a reduction of violence within schools. As such, there is a commitment from both parties to develop a plan over the life of the Collective Agreement that accomplishes the following:

1. Develop an online reporting and investigation system to track violent incidences at schools.
2. Educate schools in regards to what constitutes a violent act and how to document it properly.
3. Endeavour that all acts of violence are accurately documented at the school.
4. Ensure a Management of Aggressive Behavior Safety Plan is developed when the situation meets the criteria.
5. The Notification of Potential Risk of Injury is provided to staff if a) they are expected to encounter the student in the course of their work; and b) the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose them to physical injury.
6. For schools with increasing trends of violence, a Health and Safety Representative and the Union will meet with the school to discuss creating a plan to mitigate risk.
7. Annual Training for Principals and Workplace Stewards on Violence related topics.
8. A meeting between Health and Safety, and the Union will occur on a monthly basis to examine the data related to violent incidences at schools with the goal of addressing concerns, providing support, and developing appropriate responses/resources.

Despite the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the above has provided a framework for ETFO TVTL and TVDSB to develop concrete plans of action to reduce violence in schools.

Violence in schools is not unique to TVDSB. Violence in schools is pervasive and impacts Boards throughout the Province of Ontario. The depth and breadth of the problem requires provincial leadership from the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education.

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local recommends the following:

1. That the Government of Ontario, and the Ministry of Education develop an Anti-Violence Action Plan to address the issue of violence within schools and reduce/eliminate violence within schools.
2. That the Anti-Violence Action Plan contain within it concrete and attainable violence reduction targets.
3. That the Anti-Violence Action Plan be developed quickly and in consultation/collaboration with ETFO Provincial, other education sector stakeholders, and community groups impacted by violence.
4. That the Anti-Violence Action Plan be funded fully by the Government of Ontario/Ministry of Education.
5. That the Anti-Violence Action Plan be made mandatory for all Ontario school districts.
6. That the Anti-Violence Action Plan be reviewed annually to measure outcomes and attainment of reduction targets.

Violence in schools is a crisis of the first order that must be addressed immediately, for those who work in the education sector, for parents, the broader community, but most importantly for the students in our collective care.

Ontario needs to build better schools. Ontario needs to build safer schools. Let's get this done. For the students. For the future.