

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members

From: Craig Smith, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)

Date: August 7, 2020

Regarding: Letter to ETFO Members - Sam Hammond, ETFO President

Dear ETFO Member and Colleague,

I know as an Ontario educator, an ETFO member and in many cases a parent of a school-aged child, you are following the developments regarding back to school closely. What back to school looks like under COVID-19 has been top of mind for communities across the province, with everyone concerned about how we keep children and educators safe in our public schools at these unprecedented times.

I wanted to write to you today to assure you that your union has been asserting the needs and positions of educators since schools closed in March. There has not been a single day since the closure that we haven't been meeting, advocating, planning, consulting and negotiating on your behalf.

Yesterday the Ford Conservative government finally announced their plan for public education in September. ETFO and our education affiliates, parents and others have been demanding the plan for months. The additional provisions and funding in the plan they presented demonstrate that the pressure we have put on the government made a difference. However, there is still more work to do in the weeks ahead. The plan does not go far enough.

The government plan included the following safety measures:

- Providing masks to all educators and school staff and additional PPE when necessary;
- Mandatory masks for students in grades 4–8;
- Increased cleaning protocols and funding to implement them;
- Training for all educators including occasional members;
- Increased support for mental health;
- Additional resources for students with special needs; and
- Hiring public health nurses to support schools

While many of these measures will help mitigate the risk of spread of COVID-19 in schools, the government did not announce a plan to reduce the number of students heading back to elementary classrooms and has decided to make masks optional for students in Kindergarten - Grade 3. The Ford government continues to fall short on what our public schools need.

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We know that physical distancing and universal mask wearing are important measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. ETFO will continue to press the government to allocate more resources to reduce elementary class sizes in September so that the necessary physical distancing can be implemented, and to make masks mandatory for all students.

ETFO has also asked school boards to show leadership and ensure that their plans to reopen schools prioritize the health and safety of students, educators, school staff and their families. Click [here](#) to view the letter to school boards.

I ask that you take a few minutes to help us put pressure on the government and on school boards so that plans are adjusted to ensure a safe return to schools. You can take three actions today:

1. Listen and share ETFO's [radio ad](#).
2. [Email your MPP](#) and MP to demand additional resources for a safe school reopening.
3. [Email your school board trustees](#) to demand a plan that prioritizes the health and safety of students, educators, school staff and our communities.

Together we have pressed the government to make some of the necessary investments, but there is still much more to do. Let me assure you that we will be working every single day before the reopening of schools to advocate for safe and healthy classrooms for our members, our students and the communities we care so deeply about.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our schools safe.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Hammond
President, ETFO

For more information regarding this *summary* please contact the ETFO Local office by phone at 519-474-3150 or by email at etfotvtl@etfothamesvalley.com.

c. *ETFO TVTL Released Officers*
Terry Card, President, ETFO Thames Valley Occasional Teacher Local