

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Craig Smith, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: September 19, 2023
Regarding: **Possible September 20 Protests: Advice to Teachers**

On Wednesday, September 20 protests will occur across the country in opposition to human rights education, specifically 2SLGBTQ+ education in schools. ETFO believes that any actions or events that seek to undermine the rights and dignity of the 2SLGBTQ+ community must be denounced. As such, ETFO strongly condemns this week's planned protests and stands in solidarity with students, families, and Teachers across the province in the protection of 2SLGBTQ+ rights, in both classrooms and workplaces.

Understanding that these protests may be taking place at or near schools/worksites, it will be important that safety is prioritized. In Locals where this is the case, Teachers should ask Principals what the plan is to keep staff and students safe, and to advocate for the development of such a plan should one not exist.

Teachers who are feeling unsafe in their workplace should report this to their administrator/supervisor. They are also encouraged to reach out to their Health & Safety Representatives, the Local Office (519-474-3150), or to call ETFO Professional Relations Services (1-888-838-3836).

Teachers who may be personally impacted by these protests are advised to prioritize their own wellness. Teachers may wish to reach out to the Local Office, ETFO PRS or, if available, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Teachers should be aware that their students and colleagues may also be experiencing impacts stemming from these protests and should be prepared to identify and respond to related incidents of homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination. If members are experiencing opposition to 2SLGBTQ+ education in their school or classroom, they are encouraged to reach out to their principal and/or union for support.

Teachers have professional responsibilities under the *Education Act*, the *Human Rights Code*, and as members of the Ontario College of Teachers. Participation in these protests, including via social media, may contravene these responsibilities and could lead to possible disciplinary action.

Teachers who choose to participate in protests/counter protests are reminded to do so on their own time.

ETFO resources to support 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and education can be found here:
<https://www.etfo.ca/socialjusticeunion/2slgbtq>

As we stand together in these challenging times, we remember the words of Jack Layton:

My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.

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