

**To:** ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members

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

**Date:** November 20, 2020

**Regarding:** Summary of Meeting with Deputy Minister of Education/Affiliates (Shared with Local Presidents)

Presidents, thank you again for your participation in last night's virtual meeting. A great deal of valuable information was shared by you and that is appreciated. Below please find my summary of today's meeting with the Deputy Minister. Dr. Joshua Tepper also participated in the meeting. We discussed the following issues:

1. Ministry Survey – The Deputy Minister was asked if the results would be shared with boards and unions. She indicated that they would be sharing the information.
2. Winter Break – The Deputy Minister updated us on the issue of the winter break. She indicated that the suggestion of an extension was raised by the media originally. The issue was considered in Ontario and is also being discussed in other provinces. The Minister said he was open to advice on this issue and based his decision on the input he received from Dr. Tepper and Public Health Officials. Their strong advice was that the Ministry should keep to the original school schedule as schools are performing well in terms of limiting exposures. The number of cases that are occurring are community-based not school-based. The Deputy Minister added that schools are not “propelling” the number of cases that are occurring.  
Dr. Tepper added that it will be important to remind people to stay “bubbled” over the break and to screen employees and students upon return.  
A discussion about people starting to let their guard down also ensued. Some are feeling that masks are no longer necessary in schools and suggesting that protocols can be relaxed. Dr. Tepper responded to this by stating that “schools are safe because of the protocols in place including masking, social distancing and screening.” These must be maintained.
3. The issue of compensation for occasional staff who are required to self-isolate was raised again. The Deputy Minister apologized for the delay on this and reiterated that they are “working through this issue and going through approvals.” She also indicated that she sees the logic in why we are raising the issue. She hopes to have a response for next week's meeting.
4. The issue of the time delay for notifying occasional staff of positive cases was also raised. Examples were provided of where occasional staff are not advised of a positive case until very late into the 14 day isolation period. This is a concern. The Deputy Minister agreed to bring this to the attention of Public Health and to School Board Directors at their next meetings.

5. A question was asked about whether or not the Ministry is tracking the number of positive cases arising in special education classes. They have not looked at this issue. The Affiliates suggested that there might be some value in looking at the broken out data to evaluate whether additional protections need to be put in place. The Deputy Minister agreed to bring this issue forward to their data working group. Dr. Tepper confirmed that PPE usage in special education environments is definitely higher.

Sharon O'Halloran  
General Secretary

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](mailto:etfotvtl@etfothamesvalley.com).

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