

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members

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

Date: November 27, 2020

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

Presidents, the following is a summary of today's meeting:

1. The Deputy Minister was asked about when the regulatory amendments would be made to allow the deferral of TPAs for this school year. Some boards are proceeding with these appraisals because the regulation has not been amended to date. This is a concern. The Deputy Minister and Ministry Staff advised that they are coming shortly.
2. A discussion took place on the issue of the hybrid model. Affiliates expressed grave concerns about the inherent challenges we are facing if more boards are permitted to adopt this model. The only reason this is occurring is because boards "can't figure out" how to offer two modes of learning – in person and distance learning. The hybrid model is not sustainable. It is not pedagogically appropriate, it does not contribute to the health and well-being of staff or students. A reference was made to the staggering survey results out of CTF re teacher/educator coping levels. The Affiliates asked the Ministry to intervene on this. Ministry Staff responded by stating that boards are permitted to develop their "own staffing models." Some boards reported having "success" with the model. These boards believe that the hybrid model better addresses issues of continuous learning for students. The Ministry would like to strike a workgroup to discuss the pedagogical elements of the hybrid model and the Affiliates collectively declined to participate.
3. Follow-up was requested on a previous concern raised about a school board masking policy that permitted students to remove their masks at recess time and leave them on their desks while they proceeded down school hallways en route to the schoolyard. Other boards are now adopting similar masking protocols. The Deputy Minister advised that they did follow up when the first example was raised and they were advised that the protocol was approved by the local Public Health Unit. It was a decision made based on a 'balance of risks.' Public Health felt that the risk posed by students wearing the masks down the hall and outside at recess (dropping, losing the mask etc) was greater than the risk of leaving them in the school. The Affiliates responded by stating that this issue reinforces the challenges that exist in elementary schools with respect to reinforcing the safety protocols and the inability to ensure physical distancing.

4. The last issue addressed by the Affiliates was the safety of schools. The Windsor school closure was highlighted as evidence that the growing number of cases in schools is problematic yet the Minister and the Premier continue to suggest that schools are safe. Ventilation, class size and physical distancing remain urgent concerns. The Deputy Minister was asked when the government will acknowledge that there is an issue in schools and when will they provide funding to adequately support ventilation and class size. Other medical professionals are suggesting that the government has “their head in the sand” on this issue. They are not collecting appropriate data to make the connections. The issue of regions in ‘lockdown’ was also raised to highlight the contradictions that exist in the Ministry’s plan. Why are police converging on a restaurant that stays open to offer lunch to patrons who aren’t wearing masks but schools can remain open with 30 students in a room that is 600 square feet in size? Why can’t you have any other people in your household who are not already living there but educators and students can go to work every day with hundreds of people in the same building. How does it make sense to allow this to continue? We did not receive responses to these questions. The Deputy Minister thanked us for our input.

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.