

# Summary of Health and Safety

## Virtual Meeting for Local Leaders – Monday June 14

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Last Thursday, the final appendix was sent out to supplement the *COVID Guide for Local Leaders and Health and Safety Representatives* to wrap up this school year. At this time, locals will need to monitor concerns about end-of-year celebrations and protocols for retrieving belongings, since comprehensive provincial guidelines were not created.

Over the summer, the province is expected to provide updated safety guidelines for the fall. The Provincial Working Group on Health and Safety will be meeting, and your school boards should be consulting with local health units and your Joint Health and Safety Committees. The latest checklist provides an overview of topics that you can begin discussing with your school board.

The government has provided reassurance that staff and students are expected to have access to their second dose of a vaccine at least 2 weeks before the school year begins. Some of their press conferences have emphasized a “normal” fall, but there should be a gradual phasing out of precautions, with criteria in place to re-implement protocols based on outbreaks or increased community risk.

Last week, new **screening guidelines** were released that allow staff and students to attend school while experiencing certain symptoms after vaccination. We need to monitor these changes and continue to ask questions. As precautions are lifted, it is most important that we ensure that **contact tracing** can be done quickly to contain any outbreaks, since we may be dealing with outbreaks seasonally or as new variants arise.

ETFO continues to join experts and other unions in the calls to ensure that the government’s protocols protect against **airborne transmission**. The OFL’s campaign will soon release a lobby toolkit that you can use and share. There are appeals at the Ontario Labour Relations Board focused on airborne transmission as well. Hopefully by the fall we will see a change in public health guidelines and more support from Ministry of Labour inspectors. Our latest FAQ reminded members to notify their principals of any **ventilation** concerns. Any assessments and reports regarding ventilation should be shared with Joint Health and Safety Committees. Carbon dioxide detectors provide a verification of adequate air exchange - and are being installed in classrooms in Quebec and some areas of Europe. Medical masks should be upgraded to **N95 respirators**, especially when physical distancing is not possible, working with unmasked students. In August, we will provide updated provincial guidance about ETFO’s specific expectations for precautions.

Last year, we made some progress on **student masking**, which began through locals lobbying school board trustees, and eventually was adopted throughout the province, at least for grades 1 to 3. We will need to continue to lobby trustees, and put forward formal recommendations through Joint Health and Safety Committees. This persistence helps to hold our employers accountable for their responsibility to take every reasonable precaution in the circumstances. Please keep the documentation of your advocacy in case it is needed as evidence. And thank you for your ongoing efforts in keeping our schools safe.