



President's Newsletter December 2020

Local Tentative Agreement Reached

After over a year of preparing to bargain, then entering into months of negotiations, we achieved a local Tentative Agreement that your Collective Bargaining Committee is pleased to present to the membership.

Details of the Tentative Agreement, meeting dates, voting details and the ratification process will be communicated to the membership from Nancy D'Aurora, our Chief Negotiator.

Thank you to the following members of the Collective Bargaining Committee for all the many hours of hard work they gave to arrive at where we are today:

Nancy D'Aurora, Pam Dogra (ETFO CB Officer), Lori Burroughs Miller, Cory Judson, Michaela Kargus, Kendra Kovach, Jennifer Orr, Carolyn Proulx-Wootton, Teresa Rothwell and myself.

Zoom School Visits

Union Stewards were sent an invitation to see if their staff would like to attend a virtual school visit with Released Officers. Due to COVID restrictions, we cannot make in-person visits to schools, although we truly wish we could. We can arrange an after school or nutrition break Zoom 'visit' if your staff would like. Union Stewards just need to let me know a few dates that work best for your school.

ETFO Provincial News

ETFO members across Ontario are facing the same or similar issues with the Ford government's inadequate school reopening plan and serious staffing shortages. ETFO appreciates the stress members are under and continues to advocate for province-wide solutions. It is because of the incredible efforts of our members that the system continues to function. The following are some information highlights that ETFO has recently shared with local presidents:

- The Ontario budget is lacklustre and provides no increase in funding for health & safety in schools but is full of tax cuts.
- ETFO has filed almost 100 grievances since reopening, several of which we are winning.
- ETFO conducted telephone Town Hall meetings (Grand Erie's date was December 1) for members to ask questions, express concerns, and provide direct feedback to Provincial.
- School boards have hired over 2,000 teachers and hope to still hire another 3,000 this school year.
- School boards have hired over 1,000 additional custodians.
- Boards have acquired almost 18,000 portable ventilation devices.
- Most boards are reporting that they are under the required class size averages.

In-Class Teachers Providing Asynchronous Learning for Absent Students

As you know, parents were given the option of having their children attend either in-class or virtually. As time went on this fall, many families found that neither the Virtual Academy nor in-person were acceptable options.

As a result, hundreds of Grand Erie students dropped off enrollment and were home schooled. This large decrease in the number of students could have a significant impact on Board funding. The same dynamic is taking place in many Ontario school boards.

In response, our Board contacted the parents of children in home schooling to try to entice them to re-enroll their children. Since many of these families did not find virtual learning successful, many chose to enroll their children in their home school, but do not attend in-person. This is resulting in our in-class teachers being directed to provide asynchronous learning to their absent students. The asynchronous learning can be photocopied packages, having the student access the class Brightspace, or a customized approach that works for the teacher and the student/family.

ETFO cannot advise members to not provide asynchronous learning to absent students. My suggestion to members is to try to work out a solution that is reasonable for both the teacher and the student/family. Work-life balance and self-care must remain priorities for all members, especially as more is asked of us.



Support for Learners Funding

The Ontario government is offering one-time funding of up to \$250/child for parents and guardians to help offset costs and provide financial support for children and youth during the 2020-2021 school year. Details of this program and application are found at:

<https://www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/SupportForLearnersWeb/public/index.xhtml>

The Next School Reorganization

The Board's original plan included three dates this school year for parents to register their children in or out of the Virtual Academy. Reorganization is highly disruptive and has a very negative impact on staff. The next in/out date was planned for the first school day after the Christmas Break. That date would have been highly problematic, so the Board postponed it to February 16th which is now the final reorganization this school year. February 16th works well with report card dates and avoids reorganization connected to the Christmas Break.

Bringing Supplies Home Over the Break

We hear rumours of schools remaining closed after the Christmas Break. I have not heard that this is indeed the case. You may want to bring home supplies just in case, but this would be for peace of mind only at this time.

Have a Wonderful Holiday!



Thank you for all your hard work, flexibility, support for colleagues and endurance. Please relax and enjoy your incredibly well-earned holiday. -*Shaw Martin*