

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Mike Thomas, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: September 25, 2025
Regarding: **Communication Protocol: Right to Disconnect**

We want to take a moment to emphasize the importance of learning and caring communication in our work environment - while also acknowledging a little secret every teacher knows: sometimes, it's wonderful to disconnect without guilt. Teachers give so much of themselves each day, and it's essential to respect the right to step away from emails, messages, and work-related duties. Taking time off is not only a professional boundary - it's vital for mental health, allowing you to recharge, enjoy hobbies, spend time with family, or even take a peaceful walk in nature without worrying about your inbox.

Why Taking Breaks Matters

Stepping away from work helps to:

- Reduce stress and prevent burnout
- Recharge your brain so you're ready to tackle the week ahead (even if Monday feels far away)
- Support overall emotional and physical well-being

Communication Protocol (Collective Agreement, Letter of Understanding #7)

In alignment with our Collective Agreement, the Board and Teachers will be respectful of non-work hours. Specifically:

School Administrators and Teachers will make every reasonable effort to limit communication from Friday 6:00 p.m. to Sunday 6:00 p.m.

- During this time, Teachers are not required to respond to communications unless there are *exceptional circumstances*, which include:
 - TVARRIS being inoperative
 - Inclement weather
 - Emergency or urgent situations

There will be no reprisal if you choose to ignore non-exceptional messages over the weekend. Think of it as a permission slip to enjoy your personal time - your phone can wait, your inbox can wait, and yes, even that email marked “urgent” can wait if it’s not truly urgent.

So, go ahead - disconnect, recharge, and remember that hobbies, naps, and walks in nature count as “professional development” for your sanity. Your well-being benefits you, your students, and the entire school community.

Thank you for all that you do, and for supporting a culture of respect, care, and weekend freedom.

For any questions, concerns, or simply a friendly chat, the Local ETFO Office is only a phone call away at 519-474-3150 or an email to efothamesvalley.com - we’re here to help.

Resources for Well-Being

We encourage all members to prioritize mental health. Helpful resources include:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) <https://tvdsb.lifeworks.com/> – confidential counselling and support
- Ontario Mental Health Helpline – 1-866-531-2600
- Mindfulness and stress-reduction apps (e.g., Headspace, Calm)

Your Released Team

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local



c. Released Executive, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local