

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Mike Thomas, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: October 30, 2025
Regarding: **October Newsletter**

Dear Members,

Two months into the school year, and what a whirlwind it has already been! From “Meet the Teacher” nights to staff meetings, professional development days, coaching school teams, leading bands and clubs, supporting students with diverse needs, and mentoring colleagues both formally and informally - you have approached the start of the year with energy, dedication, and remarkable skill.

Beyond the scheduled events and official duties, it's the countless behind-the-scenes moments that truly define your work. Taking the time to connect with students, offering guidance, stepping in to support a colleague, or quietly handling challenges as they arise - these are the moments that build strong school communities and shape meaningful learning experiences every day. Your ability to juggle so many roles at once, sometimes all in the same hour, continues to impress.

The Local sincerely thanks you for all that you do every day to make this school year a success. Your professionalism, care, and dedication inspire students, colleagues, and the broader school community alike.

I'd like to take a few moments to share some of the work the Local is doing to support you.

Advocacy Work

We recently held our second meeting with a local Conservative MPP, with another discussion scheduled soon. In addition, we had the opportunity to meet with Supervisor Boniferno to continue advocating on behalf of our members. While this was a preliminary discussion, there will be future meetings to continue to share the needs that members are facing on a daily basis.

Last spring, members shared personal accounts of workplace violence - incidents many face daily in classrooms across the system. We really appreciate you taking the time to share your stories – thank you! These stories have been compiled into a comprehensive booklet, which we are currently presenting to MPPs, the Director, and the Supervisor. Our goal is to ensure decision-makers hear directly from those most affected by this devastating issue, often arising from students who are inadequately supported.

ETFO's *Promises Unfulfilled* report underscores this concern, highlighting chronic underfunding and systemic gaps in special education. Reductions in specialized staff, such as educational assistants, child and youth workers, and special education resource teachers, have left educators struggling to meet increasingly complex student needs. Delays in assessments, insufficient access to mental health supports, and the absence of coordinated services further strain both teachers and students, impacting the ability to maintain safe and supportive learning environments.

Through these advocacy meetings and with the presentation of member experiences, we continue to advocate for the restoration and enhancement of special education funding and services, so all students receive the support they need - and educators can work in safe environments and create equitable and respectful learning conditions.

Red for Ed

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local is asking members to **wear red every Monday** in solidarity with our Alberta colleagues, where more than **51,000 teachers** have gone on strike to demand fair compensation, smaller class sizes, and better supports for students. Their action affects over **750,000 students** and highlights issues shared by educators across Canada. By wearing red, we show our collective support for public education and respect for the teaching profession. Members are encouraged to **send photos** of their **Red for Ed** spirit to the Local and **follow @etfotvtl on Instagram** to stay connected and amplify our message of solidarity.

Local Updates

We are excited to share that we have nearly completed the first leg of our 24-school visit tour! A heartfelt thank you to everyone who met with us, shared ideas for strengthening our Local, and highlighted ongoing concerns. Your input is invaluable - the strength of our Local is built on the voices of its members.

As a little extra incentive (and because we like to spread joy), 24 individuals will be randomly selected to receive a \$25 gift card for participating in these conversations. These discussions don't just strengthen our Local - they remind us all that we are the Union.

Looking ahead, we aim to visit another 24 schools before the winter break. Keep an eye out - we might be stopping by your school soon, and we can't wait to connect with even more of you!

Meanwhile, our Non-Released team will be actively engaging with newly hired members in the near future, welcoming them into the ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local family, and inviting them to our New Teacher Training Session on November 25. Remember what it was like to be a new teacher? A friendly check-in from a seasoned colleague can make all the difference. Whether it's sharing survival strategies, offering tips for Parent-Teacher Interviews, or simply lending an encouraging word, your guidance can turn a daunting experience into a memorable one.

Together, whether new or experienced, we continue to build a Local that is connected, supported, and thriving - one school visit at a time.

Workplace Steward Training: November 4 - 6

A big shoutout to all our Workplace Stewards! You are the unsung heroes at your schools, juggling meetings, advocating for members, and often giving up prep time (or even lunch) to support colleagues. From navigating challenging conversations to being a friendly face in the hallway, your dedication doesn't go unnoticed. If you see your Steward, Alternate, or Health and Safety Rep, take a moment to say thank you - it goes a long way!

Professional Learning Opportunities

Level up your skills and reignite your passion with these upcoming workshops:

- November 10: Support Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- November 12: Experienced Teacher TPA Session
- November 25: New Teacher Training
- November 26: Making a Difference – Reigniting the Passion

Practical strategies, meaningful insights, and yes - some good conversation too.

Affiliate Resources

Have you ever checked out OTF and its' Connects Webinar series? These free sessions offer practical tips and tools to support your teaching across all grades and subjects. Join from any device and leave with ready-to-use strategies. **Spots are limited - register early!**

Social Spotlight: Trivia Night – November 7

Think you know it all? Or just in it for a fun night out? Either way, join us at Upper Thames Brewery for Trivia Night. Compete for glory (and the coveted Human Encyclopedia award) or simply enjoy the laughs, camaraderie, and maybe a craft beer or two.

Fall General Meeting: November 27

Your Union, your voice, your community. Join our Fall General Meeting to:

- Hear what your Union is working on
- Share concerns and ideas
- Connect with fellow ETFO members

Mileage, dependent care, and dinner are covered. All you need to do is show up and join the conversation. Think of it as professional development with a side of social time!

Period Products for the Fall General Meeting

Let's turn compassion into action! Bring women's and period products to the Fall General Meeting to support women's crisis centres across Thames Valley — and rally your colleagues to do the same! Every

school that contributes will be entered into a draw for a **staff lunch delivered by members of your released team**. Let's show what Thames Valley solidarity looks like!

Local Memos

Parent/Caretaker-Teacher Interviews: It's that time of year again - the season when teachers sharpen their communication skills, perfect their "active listening" face, and somehow explain fractions, feelings, and future goals - all before lunch. Remember, under our Letter of Understanding, you have flexibility that day. Whether you're meeting families bright and early or later in the day, your professionalism is fully recognized and appreciated.

Inclement Weather: As temperatures drop and we all play the annual game of "is this frost or just my windshield lying to me?", it's a good time to revisit our Inclement Weather Memo. While we sent this memo out last month, winter is sneaking up, so please take another moment to review the details, because in Canada, "a little weather" can mean anything from light flurries to a full-blown snow globe overnight!

In Conclusion

As we continue through this school year, remember that every effort you make - big or small - matters. From the classroom to the staffroom, from formal meetings to quiet moments of support, your dedication shapes the learning experiences and lives of the students you teach and the colleagues you collaborate with.

We are proud to represent such a committed, talented, and compassionate group of educators. Together, through advocacy, professional learning, and connection, we strengthen our schools, our Local, and our profession.

Thank you for all that you do. Stay inspired, support one another, and keep making a difference - every single day. And remember, for any questions, concerns, or simply a friendly chat, the Local ETFO office is only a phone call away we're here to help.

With appreciation,

Mike Thomas, President
ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local



c. *Released Executive, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local*