

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Mike Thomas, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: September 2, 2026
Regarding: **Welcome Back**

Colleagues,

Welcome Back!

I hope everyone had a great summer and that you were able to find some time to relax, recharge, and spend some time with family, friends, and loved ones. It is hard to believe that another school year is already here.

As we get ready to welcome students back, I want to start by saying thank you. I know how much work goes into getting classrooms and schools ready for the first day. Over the past week especially, many of you have spent countless hours organizing classrooms, preparing materials, planning, and doing all of those little things that help students feel welcome when they walk through the door. That work shows your passion and dedication as educators.

Every day, you support students in ways that go well beyond what most people see. You build relationships, create safe and welcoming spaces, support families, solve problems, advocate for students, and somehow continue to adapt to whatever gets thrown your way. I know the job has become increasingly difficult, and I also know how much you continue to give to your students and school communities. Please know how much that work is valued and appreciated.

We also know that this year will bring some challenges. As we move into the fall, we will be asking members to stand together as we work to defend the public education system that we all care so deeply about. There will be a time for that work, and we will make sure you have the information and support you need along the way.

One of the first opportunities will be a Day of Solidarity on September 16, which ETFO Provincial is asking members to participate in. More information is being sent to your workplace stewards and we will also share it shortly.

We are also asking everyone to continue **wearing Red4Ed on Mondays**. It is a small thing, but when thousands of us do it together, it sends an important message about our commitment to each other, our students, and public education.

There will be a lot happening this year, but we will take it one step at a time. We will keep you informed, we will be there when you need support, and we will face the challenges ahead together. That is what solidarity truly means. Not just standing together when something happens, but knowing that none of us has to face those moments alone.

As your colleague, I am incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to support you again this year in the role of President. I don't take that responsibility for granted and am grateful to stand beside you and support you each and every day. Whether you need advice, representation, information, or just someone to talk something through with, your Local Released Team is here for you. Never hesitate to reach out.

There will be lots of time in the months ahead to talk about bargaining, funding, politics, and the challenges facing public education. For now, I hope you can enjoy the excitement that comes with the beginning of a new school year and take some pride in everything you have done to get ready for your students.

Most importantly, thank you for the work you do every day. Thank you for caring about your students, for supporting one another, and for continuing to make a difference in our schools and communities.

I hope you have a great first week and a positive start to the year. I look forward to seeing many of you in schools and at Local events over the coming months.

Whatever this year brings, we will get through it the way we always do: **together**.

In solidarity,

Michael Thomas

President

ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local



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 etfotvtl@etfothamesvalley.com - we're here to help.