

Ontario is currently at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), which represents 83,000 teachers and educators in elementary public schools, has significant concerns about educators' and students' health and safety, particularly in those communities where the transmission rate is high.

ETFO's position on in-person learning remains unchanged. The union firmly believes that in-person instruction in publicly-funded schools provides the best experience for learning, quality delivery and is the most equitable model for all students. We know that educators are eager to be back with their students in their classrooms. ETFO will continue to demand action from the government, school boards and public health units to ensure in-person learning can resume quickly and safely.

With COVID-19 numbers at an all-time high in areas of the province, the priority must be protecting the health and safety of students, educators and our communities. The lack of investment from the Ontario government to ensure smaller classes for physical distancing, proper ventilation, and masking for all has put safety for in-person learning at risk.

At this time, when in-person learning has paused for many in a large part of the province, ETFO calls on the government to take this time to immediately implement the necessary measures to ensure a safe return to in-person learning as soon as possible. This includes funding for reducing class sizes to ensure physical distancing can be maintained, improving ventilation in schools, deploying CO2 monitors in every classroom and HEPA filters where necessary, making masks mandatory for all students and introducing broad, school based asymptomatic testing.

Asking students and educators to return to in-person learning in special education classrooms without safety precautions in place is concerning. To support our students with special needs returning to in-person school, proper ventilation and air filtration is essential. Some students due to medical needs are unable to wear a mask. Ventilation that exceeds simply opening a window is necessary, as well as risk assessments to determine the best personal protective equipment.

ETFO recognizes that shutting down in-person learning and extending distance learning adds additional pressure on educators and impacts mental health, particularly those with school-age children. This pandemic has had disastrous impact on single parents, racialized people and their families and women at a disproportionate rate, all of whom make up the majority of workers in health care, education and retail. As a provincial union and the largest union representing teachers in Canada, ETFO will continue to press the government and various decision-makers to provide support to all parents and families and to account for the childcare needs of educators and other front-line workers.

Given that the government has failed in its responsibility to protect Ontarians and implement necessary measures that protect people and prevent further spread of the virus, our union is forced to act. As educators, parents and residents, this crisis requires us to do everything possible to protect those who are most vulnerable and our world class public education system.

Public Education, Reopening Schools and Safety During COVID-19

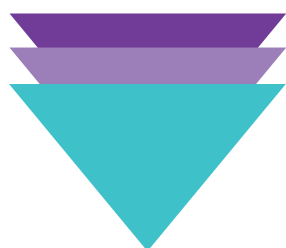


JOIN US

Speak out and demand safety and supports for students, educators and their families.

ETFO has

- ➔ **Filed over 100 grievances** across the province in schools to hold school boards (the employer) to account to ensure health and safety and working conditions are upheld and school boards fulfill obligations as an employer by taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers.
- ➔ **Lobbied the provincial government** to provide funding to support all families, and to account for the childcare needs of educators and other front-line workers.
- ➔ **Urged the government** to institute paid sick days for all workers because no one should have to choose between self-isolation, staying home sick and paying the bills.
- ➔ **Advocated to ensure** that governments acknowledge and address the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on marginalized communities, particularly for racialized and low-income families and workers.
- ➔ **Pushed for immediate implementation** of the necessary measures to ensure a safe return to in-person learning is possible. This includes reducing class sizes to ensure physical distancing can be maintained, improving ventilation, deploying CO2 monitors to every classroom in the province, making masks mandatory for all students and introducing broad, school based asymptomatic testing.
- ➔ **Urged all Ontario Public Health Units** to use their authority to protect our communities and ensure that when in-person learning can safely resume, school-based, asymptomatic surveillance testing is implemented.
- ➔ **Encouraged the government** to ensure educators are given priority for voluntary vaccinations as front-line workers.



ETFO will continue to press the government for enhancements to existing health and safety measures that will help to protect students and educators and by extension, the communities in which we teach.

Join us.

TAKE ACTION

Message Premier Ford and your MPP to demand the government act swiftly to make schools safer for in-person learning and provide much-needed supports to families.

BuildingBetterSchools.ca/covid