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Bare Essentials

December 2020

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**May your holidays
sparkle with
moments of love,
laughter, and
goodwill, and may
the year ahead be
filled with
contentment and
joy.**

Happy Holidays!

Just a reminder that the ETFO Niagara Local Office will be closed from Saturday, December 19, 2020, until Monday, January 4, 2021.

In the event of an emergency, such as an allegation of assault, teachers should:

- NOT participate in or consent to an interview
- Make NO statement to anyone regarding the allegations or charges
- Say "I'm willing to cooperate but am unable to comment until I contact my Federation and legal counsel."
- Call Professional Relations Services (PRS) at 1-888-838-3836. State that your call is urgent and you will need to speak to the duty officer.
- If you get voice mail, leave your name, phone numbers and times you are available. State that your call is an emergency. Your call will be answered, but you will be put on hold while a lawyer (on call), is contacted.

If you have any questions about benefits, they should be directed to OTIP by calling 1-866-783-6847. You will need your plan information located on your Benefit Card.

On behalf of everybody here at the ETFO Niagara office, we would like to wish you the best this holiday season. May you enjoy the well-deserved time off, and best wishes to you and yours in the New Year! Take care and stay safe.

Peace and happiness,
Brian, Gail, Jenn, and Tena



Reminder: If you have questions or concerns about Health & Safety issues, speak to your administrator and your Site Health & Safety Rep.



COVID-19 FAQ

I am considering a vacation during my scheduled time off. Can I access a leave to quarantine when I return?

Members should stay informed of any provincial or federal travel restrictions and be aware of any federal, provincial, or public health advisories concerning quarantine restrictions when returning from travel outside of Ontario. If there is a required period of quarantine following travel, members should incorporate that time into their plans so that they are able to report to work according to their regular schedule. Members should consult with their local regarding any available paid or unpaid leave that may be accessed during the regular school year following a vacation period. Members may face discipline, up to and including termination, from their employer if they choose to travel and know (or ought to have known) that they will not be fit to return to work as scheduled owing to quarantine requirements.

As a virtual school teacher, I have been asked repeatedly to attend staff meetings and professional learning sessions outside of the school day. Is there a limit to the meetings I am expected to attend each month?

Your collective agreement has language on the number of staff meetings that members can be expected to attend in any given month. In the ETFO Niagara Local, that would be one 75-minute staff meeting. If members are being required to attend more staff meetings than permitted under their collective agreement, they should contact their local office for advice.

I teach in a Virtual School. Several students have been exempted from synchronous learning minutes for portions of the day. Caregivers are requesting that I record and post all of my synchronous lessons so students can watch them at their convenience. Am I obligated to record and post these videos online?

No. Members can use their understanding of their classroom and students, their professional knowledge and training to implement the curriculum in a meaningful way. Members should be prepared to provide rationale for the decisions they make, if asked.

Some members may find it helpful to record and post some lessons online as a part of their synchronous learning and online learning materials. For example, a teacher may decide to record a math lesson ahead of their synchronous lesson to then use that video as a part of their live lesson and post it to their online classroom. How they choose to teach and post work online is a [professional judgement](#) decision.

As part of PPM 164, parents/caregivers have the option to request an exemption from synchronous learning. Alternative learning approaches must be provided for all exempted students. Examples include correspondence, print or broadcast media instruction. Exempted students must also be provided with a daily schedule or timetable in accordance with the 300-minute instructional day. Members should reach out to their administrator regarding obligations for providing work to students with exemptions.

If members choose to record synchronous lessons, they should be very cautious about recording students' images and voices, and ensure media release forms have been signed by each family. Videos should only be posted in a password-protected online classroom provided by the school board (i.e. Brightspace, Google Classroom) and any option to download should be disabled.

Collective Agreement 101

Leave Plans:

Family Care

You are entitled to up to three (3) days for tending to your own children, parents, spouse, parent-in-law, or any other relative who resides in your household.

Bereavement

You are entitled to up to:

✓ five (5) school days for the following: father, mother, spouse, child, common-law spouse, or any other relative who lived in your household.

✓ three (3) school days for the following: brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, or fiancé(e).

✓ one (1) school day for the following: aunt, uncle, grandparent-in-law or to act as a pallbearer.

Mental Health Matters

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A COLLEAGUE

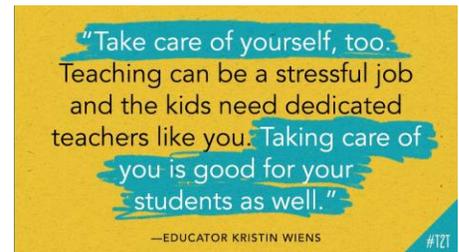
There are times you notice a colleague is struggling at work and wonder how to support them. Don't assume that your co-worker is suffering from mental illness. Many people experience illnesses differently. Let your colleague decide how much they are willing to share. If they share they are struggling, encourage them to seek professional assistance through their medical practitioner. You can also:

- Ask how you can help and respect your co-workers wishes.
- Continue to include your co-worker in the usual activities at your worksite.
- Depending on your relationship, you can still keep in touch with a co-worker who takes time off. When a co-worker returns to work after time off due to a mental illness, make them feel welcome and appreciated. Saying nothing because you're worried about saying the wrong thing can make your co-worker feel worse.
- Advocate for healthy workplaces. Many wellness strategies are low-cost or no-cost, but they can still improve everyone's well-being and build inclusive spaces. Visit the Canadian Mental Health Associations Mental Health Works resource at www.mentalhealthworks.ca for ideas and strategies. (Canadian Mental Health Association)

For further information:

<https://etfo.ca/SupportingMembers/Employees/PDF%20Versions/Member%20Mental%20Health%20-%202017.pdf>

Just a reminder that the DSBN has an Employee Family Assistance Program you can access here: [EFAP](#)



Ready to Read! Program

Has there been a recent birth in your school community? Let us know by filling out and submitting this Google Form: [Ready to Read! Form](#)



We will send a Ready to Read package to welcome the arrival of the newborn baby. Packages are available for school staff and school families. We will send each package to the school via Board Courier, c/o the member who submitted the form.

PRS Matters

What is Professional Relations Services (PRS)?

At both the Local and Provincial Offices, we are available to provide information, advice, support, and intervention for members who are experiencing professional difficulties, or who need assistance with understanding our professional rights and responsibilities.

A few of the areas support is provided are:

- Difficulties with students, other staff, parents, and administrators
- Ethics and professionalism
- Preg/Parental Leaves
- Long Term Disability
- Return to work/ accommodation issues
- Professional Judgement
- Health and Safety

To access ETFO Provincial's advisory newsletters follow this link:

[PRS Matters Bulletins](#)

Virtual Site Visits

An important part of our role as Released Officers is connecting with members. Due to public health protocols and the chaotic start up of the school year this fall, we have not been able to personally visit with members at schools/sites. Now that fall reporting and re-org is finished, we would love to set up a virtual visit with you. It is an opportunity for you to meet with us in a small group via Zoom. We can also tailor our virtual visit to cover information that may be of interest to members on your staff. If you are interested in setting up a virtual visit for your site, please contact Brian Barker (pres@etfoniagara.ca).



Thank You School Stewards!

We want to recognize our School Stewards and thank them for the important leadership role they play in service to their colleagues. Stewards are invaluable as they are the guardians of our Collective Agreement at each site. They are colleagues that you can go to for information about ETFO's services, questions about our Collective Agreement, and to problem-solve workplace issues.

If you are a School Steward, the ETFO Provincial website has a variety of resources available to help you in your role that you can access here: [Steward Resources](#). They have also developed an updated Steward Manual which you can access here: [Steward Manual](#). In the new year, our Local will be offering Steward Training Sessions based on this new document. Watch for more information this winter!

We have several schools/sites that currently do not have an ETFO Steward. We are hoping that members at those locations might consider working together with one or two colleagues as Co-Stewards. Please contact Jennifer Sims Murray at the office (905-641-2911 or vp1@etfoniagara.ca) if you are interested in serving in this important role for your site.

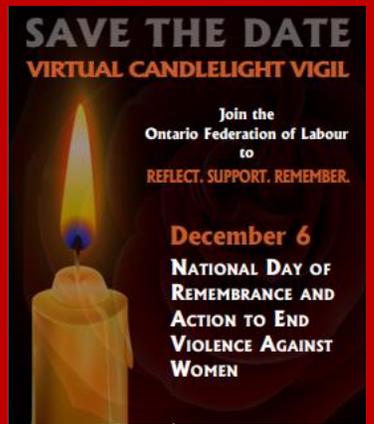


National Day of Remembrance and Action To End Violence Against Women

It has been over thirty years since the murder of 14 young women at Polytechnique Montréal (December 6th, 1989). As we mourn their loss, and honour their memory, we reaffirm our commitment to fight the hatred that led to this tragedy, and the misogyny that still exists today.

To reflect, support, and remember the day, the Ontario Federation of Labour, will be hosting an Inaugural "Day of Remembrance" Virtual Candlelight Vigil. The ZOOM/FacebookLive event will take place on Sunday, December 6th at 6:30-7:30pm.

RSVP your attendance to [Virtual Candlelight Vigil](#)



A Healthy O-TIP: Feeling stressed and anxious? You are not alone

There is a 'normal' rhythm to the school year that has been disrupted by COVID-19. This is causing many of you to feel stressed, anxious and maybe a little uncertain about the future. It's important to know this is normal - and it's OK to feel concerned about what comes next. Allowing yourself to acknowledge feelings of stress and anxiety creates an opportunity for learning. It helps you to better understand the world around you and manage your approach to resiliency.

To learn more, visit www.otipinsurance.com/article89



Important Health and Safety Survey

ETFO has been working in partnership with the [Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers](#) (OHCOW), with help from researchers at the [Institute of Work & Health](#) and Duke University in North Carolina. [A Survey of Education Workers' Experiences during the Pandemic Second Wave](#) is designed to explore the links between personal protective equipment (PPE), safe work protocols and member mental health. All information collected will be confidential. The survey is based on one that has been fielded in the health care sector in Ontario, where results very clearly demonstrated adverse effects suffered by workers during the pandemic and the deficiencies in occupational health and safety at workplaces. This version of the survey has been developed specifically for ETFO and includes some questions to reflect specific concerns of our **members in schools and working from home**.

This is the link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WHS85MY>



Save the Date!

**Wednesday,
February 3rd and
Tuesday, February 4th**

The Arts and Mental
Health Virtual Workshop

(Details and registration
information to follow)

**Wednesday,
February 17th**

Winter General Meeting
(Virtual)

(Eventbrite registration
link will be shared in
January)

**Follow ETFO Niagara on
Eventbrite to keep
informed about
upcoming events!**



**Remember to follow us
on Social Media too!**



Executive Member Spotlight

Each month we will be highlighting our Executive Members so that you can get to know the teachers representing you and working on your behalf. This month we are going to introduce you to Christine McGovern (Treasurer) and Jim Brigham (Equity and Social Justice Chair).

Christine McGovern, Treasurer



Years as a Teacher: 15, 5 years on ETFO Niagara Executive

ETFO Responsibilities: Christine is responsible for keeping record of the finances, and account of all monies, as well as assets going out and coming in. She assists Gail to oversee the payment of all accounts and expenses, acts as one of the signing officers, and serves on the Budget Committee. Christine also gives the financial report at both Executive and General Meetings, including presenting the results of the audited report to the general membership. You will also find Christine serving on other various Standing Committees, and volunteering at Local Events.

Favourite Educational Quote: "Whether you think you can or think you can't - you're right." ~ Henry Ford

Favourite Hobby: Reading, snowshoeing, making maple syrup, playing with my dog, Sadie

Jim Brigham, Equity & Social Justice Chair



Years as a Teacher: 26 (7 in the U.S. and 19 in Canada), 5 years on ETFO Niagara Executive

ETFO Responsibilities: Jim promotes equity within the ETFO Niagara Local by providing strategies to ensure that all ETFO Niagara activities are inclusive, as well as acting as our Human Rights Officer at meetings. He offers various workshops throughout the year and attends specialized training sessions through ETFO Provincial in order to help guide our Executive in looking at policies and procedures through an equity lens. He also promotes social justice in our local community by

partnering with equity seeking groups (e.g., setting up an information booth at Pride in the Park). Jim works alongside our Status of Women Chair to promote equity and fairness, which is achieved through proactive measures resulting in equality for all.

Favourite Quote: "The whole moon and the entire sky are reflected in one dewdrop on the grass." ~ Dogen

Favourite Hobbies: Reading, Hiking, Running, Biking, Canoeing