

A Letter from ETFO President Karen Brown

January 15, 2022

Dear Members,

I want to begin by thanking you for your extraordinary work and efforts throughout the pandemic, including the latest round of last-minute, emergency online learning and our transition back to the classroom. Each of you has been called on to do so much, often going well beyond your job description.

This year continues to be incredibly difficult, and I want you to know that your union is working every day to pressure the government for improved safety measures and working conditions for ETFO members, and improved learning conditions for students.

Without a doubt, it has been your dedication to your classrooms and the public education system that has sustained so many students and their families during these challenging times. But often, this care has come at your own expense.

I have heard from members across the province who are experiencing a range of emotions as they prepare to return to in-person learning or continue to support students who cannot be accommodated through remote learning. Some members are enthusiastic and feel safe, others are cautiously optimistic, and some are anxious. I want you to know that I have personally spoken to the Premier on your behalf, and that ETFO will continue to do everything it can to lobby and pressure the government to support your physical and mental well-being.

With the Ford government in Queen's Park, the odds have not been in our favour, but we have persisted...together. It is our advocacy that forced the province to implement enhanced PPE for educators, increase access to rapid antigen tests, improve ventilation, and give education workers priority access to boosters. However, we know that, on all these fronts and many others, the government has fallen far short and has often been far too late in making critical decisions.

I want to assure you that ETFO is working behind the scenes every day on your behalf. We will be here to answer your questions. We will continue to campaign and lobby the government to ensure that educators and students have safe and healthy classrooms. And, understanding the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on already marginalized communities, we will continue to lead in areas of equity and social justice.

Despite the challenges thrown at you, you have continued to teach and support Ontario's students. However, any worker has the right to refuse work that they believe is unsafe. To learn more about this process, please visit etfohealthandsafety.ca.

Be gentle to yourself as you support students, as you always have, with care and compassion. Again, you have my commitment that ETFO is here to support you. Thank you for everything you will do in the weeks and months ahead.

In solidarity,



Karen Brown, ETFO President