



Health & Safety

know your rights

Volume 2, Issue 3

The Peel Elementary Teachers' Local aspires to promote good health and safety preventive measures, and educate members on steps they can take to keep themselves safe at work.

BURNOUT

Burnout is a psychological risk. It develops gradually when work is unpleasant, unrewarding, and unfulfilling. Recognizing it is important to prevent and/or recover from burnout. In 2019, the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) conducted a [poll](#) where 30% of Ontario workers responded that they experienced burnout “all of the time” or “a large part of the time.”

Burnout doesn't just affect teachers. Studies have shown a correlation between teacher burnout and student achievement. Teaching has been ranked as one of the most stressful professions, and teachers experience stress and burnout more frequently than other professions.

What are the [signs of burnout](#)?

- Physical and emotional exhaustion;
- Cynicism and detachment;
- Feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment.

Recognizing the signs of burnout, and strategies to prevent or recover from burnout are important. Building balance into your lives can help you avoid burnout, and it may require setting clear work boundaries. Make sure you have some time set aside where [school is the last thing on your mind](#).

How can you [prevent and recover](#) from teacher burnout?

- Talk about it;
- Practice Self-care;
- Know when to take a break;
- Plan for community;
- Find out what went wrong;
- Put things in perspective;
- Try something new;
- Ask for help.

You should not be afraid to take care of yourself, so you can be there for your students.

INDOOR TEMPERATURES

Cold temperatures, even indoors, can have a negative effect on you. It can increase your vulnerability to catching colds and flu. (A [2007 study](#) at New York's Mount Sinai Medical School determined that cold makes it harder to get rid of viruses.) It can also worsen arthritis pain. And it can raise your blood pressure and heart rate.

[Ontario Reg 851](#), Section 129, sets the minimum temperature for enclosed workplaces at 18C. This is an absolute minimum, and can still feel quite cold, as the recommended winter heat settings for homes is 20-22C.

If you suspect that your workplace is below 18C, please contact your principal and ask them to investigate. If it is found to be below that temperature, they are obligated to provide you with a workspace that is at, or above 18C, until they can ensure that your classroom meets the minimum temperature.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Indoor air quality affects [children's performance at school](#). Good Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) can [improve student and staff productivity, and improve test scores](#). One thing that has resulted from the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic is that it has raised a long-overdue awareness for indoor air quality, and its effect on students and teachers.

[Sick Building Syndrome](#) is a term used to describe situations where illness and other negative health effects appear to be linked to time spent indoors with inadequate air quality. Not everyone is affected by negative IAQ in the same way, but it can affect anyone. Common [symptoms](#) can include (but are not limited to) headache, fatigue, allergies, and sinus congestion.

Indoor Air Quality is a concern in many [older schools](#) due to the age and condition of the building. All schools will have a Standard Ventilation Measure Report listed on the schools' homepage (posted on Sept 3, 2021).

For more information, you can go to ETFO's Health and Safety page on [Indoor Air Quality](#).

OFFICE ERGONOMICS

[Musculoskeletal disorders](#) (MSDs) are a common and costly problem and can affect anyone and everyone. The Covid-19 pandemic and online teaching have brought an increased awareness of good (and bad) ergonomics. [Common symptoms](#) of MSDs include joint stiffness, redness and swelling, and even numbness ("pins and needles").

A [good ergonomic workstation](#) can help prevent MSDs, improve your physical health, and improve the quality of your work and productivity. Having your computer workstation and keyboard at the correct height and orientation is only part of the solution. [Good posture](#) when sitting is also important to prevent MSDs. [Here is a good video](#) to help you improve your computer workstation ergonomics.

OHCOW has a [list of resources](#) that can be useful to assess your ergonomics and further educate yourself.

Should you have concerns with any of the above items, or any Health & Safety issue, please contact the local and speak to your Vice-President liaison.