

News Release

Catholic Teachers Demand *Safe Schools Now*

September 17, 2021

TORONTO – In response to the Ford government’s incomplete and inadequate back-to-school plan, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA) has launched *Safe Schools Now*, a new campaign calling on the Ford government to invest in and implement the safety measures called for by education and public health experts for a safe and sustainable school year.

Public health and education experts agree that the massive disruptions and learning losses of the previous school years cannot be repeated. Students must be back in classrooms, experiencing the benefits of in-person learning, including one-on-one interaction with educators, socialization with friends, and extracurricular activities, but it must be done safely for it to be sustainable.

“Despite having more than 18 months to develop a plan to address COVID-19 in our schools and make the investments necessary for a safe learning environment, the Ford government has refused to act, threatening in-person learning for the third year in a row,” says OECTA President Barb Dobrowolski.

“Catholic teachers are inviting all educators, parents, and Ontarians to join us in calling on this government to act and invest in a safe and sustainable school year.”

Despite calls from doctors and public health experts, including robust recommendations from [The Ontario Science Table](#) and [SickKids Hospital](#), the Ford government has not implemented key school safety recommendations, choosing instead to cut publicly funded education by \$12.3 billion over the next decade.

Catholic teachers call on this government to end the cuts, reinvest in publicly funded education, and implement the following measures for safer schools now:

- a mandatory vaccination program in schools;
- mandatory masking for all teachers, education workers, students, and visitors in schools;
- smaller class sizes to allow for proper physical distancing;
- improved ventilation, with public air quality measurements and transparency, so we know if safety standards in schools are being met;
- COVID-19 outbreak management, including robust testing and tracing;
- investments to address student learning loss and mental health concerns; and
- improved vaccination education, outreach, and accessibility.

Students, educators, and families need a real plan that prioritizes the safety and well-being of our schools and allows for a safe and sustainable year of in-person learning.

To learn more and write your MPP to demand *Safe Schools Now*, visit safe-schools-now.ca.

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Jasmine Lagundzija, jasmine.lagundzija@crestviewstrategy.com, (519) 217-1245