



Presentation to the TCDSB Board of Trustees  
Thursday, July 23, 2020  
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President of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers

Good evening,

You are faced with a very challenging decision.

There is much that remains unknown about COVID-19 and its transmission, but here is what we do know.

There is no vaccine and the virus has not mutated into a more benign state.

We are only in the first wave. The second wave is coming.

Knowledge of the virus is rapidly evolving.

Children get it and children spread it.

We have no defence against this deadly virus.

We try to mitigate its spread through restrictions, hand washing, physical distancing and mask wearing.

Many are tired of these measures but rest assured COVID-19 is not tired.

If we reopen schools in September the virus will spread.

Some countries had to close schools after reopening as virus numbers increased and this put a strain on their health care system. A similar outcome here may mitigate any economic benefit that may arise from school reopening.

OECTA has stated that everyone's preference would be to return to classrooms but the health and safety of staff, students and their families must be paramount.

The Province followed a cautious phased-in approach to reopening Ontario and kept Toronto in Stage Two.

There is no planned phased-in approach for reopening schools.

In September, the Ministry wants all schools open yet, the impact remains uncertain.

To take a bus or enter a store, adults and children must wear masks; yet, once schools reopen this requirement may not exist.

The Ministry says teachers who stand at the front of the class, keeping two metres away from their students, do not need masks.

**Elementary teachers do not stand at the front of their class lecturing students from two metres away. Anyone who suggests this has no idea of what happens in an elementary classroom.**

If the premise of a successful reopening of schools is based on consistent physical distancing then realise, that is not possible in an elementary school.

We are simply not ready from a health and safety perspective.

Toronto is unlike any other jurisdiction in the province and to make the best decision, more time must be requested from the Ministry. To make a decision to reopen schools now, with so much uncertainty, will put the health and well-being of our students, staff and their families at grave risk.

Please heed the advice of Pope Francis:

*I am always wary of decisions made hastily. I have to wait and assess, looking deep into myself, taking the necessary time.*