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Catholic principals join call for slower re-opening

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The Catholic Principals Council of Ontario, representing administrators working for the Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington School Board, added their voices late last week to a call by public board principals represented by the Ontario Principals Council to keep schools shuttered across Ontario for one more week as staff prepare for schooling in the age of COVID.

“The CPCO along with the OPC and the ADFO (French speaking principal’s federation) have jointly recommended delaying the start of school until September 14,” says the president of the CPCO Blaine MacDougall.

“This will afford principals, vice-principals and staff to better prepare for the start of a new school year,” MacDougall adds.

“This time frame will allow for training on matters that included proper protocols in the use of PPE, entry into school, tracing

and a host of other concerns that all administrators are working through.”

Locally the CPCO represents administrators at St. Luke’s in Downeyville, St. Mary’s, St. Dominic’s, Saint John Paul and St. Thomas Aquinas in Lindsay and St. John’s in Kirkfield.

“We believe that this (later start) would be a calmer and more welcoming approach to the start of a new school year,” MacDougall suggests.

“The CPCO...is in full agreement with the recommendations (for a delayed start in school openings) outlined by the OPC and ADFO,” MacDougall concludes.

One local school board watcher who asked for anonymity was surprised at the recent union announcements.

“I have never seen all three principals’ federations, all four teachers’ unions and CUPE agree on anything of substance. This unity is seldom seen in the topsy-turvy world of educational politics in Ontario.”

“I think the government ignores this reasonable request (for a later opening) at its own peril,” the source suggests.

A long time local member of OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association who represents all staff working in the publicly funded separate system, said staff are relieved.

“Better late than never our principals have

raised health and safety concerns on behalf of their people,” he said.

“Just because schools are open,” he added, “doesn’t mean they are ready and safe for

staff and students to return. I am hopeful the province will look at this almost unheard of united front and slow the train down so we get this opening right.”

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Kirk is a retired high school history teacher and coach who has