
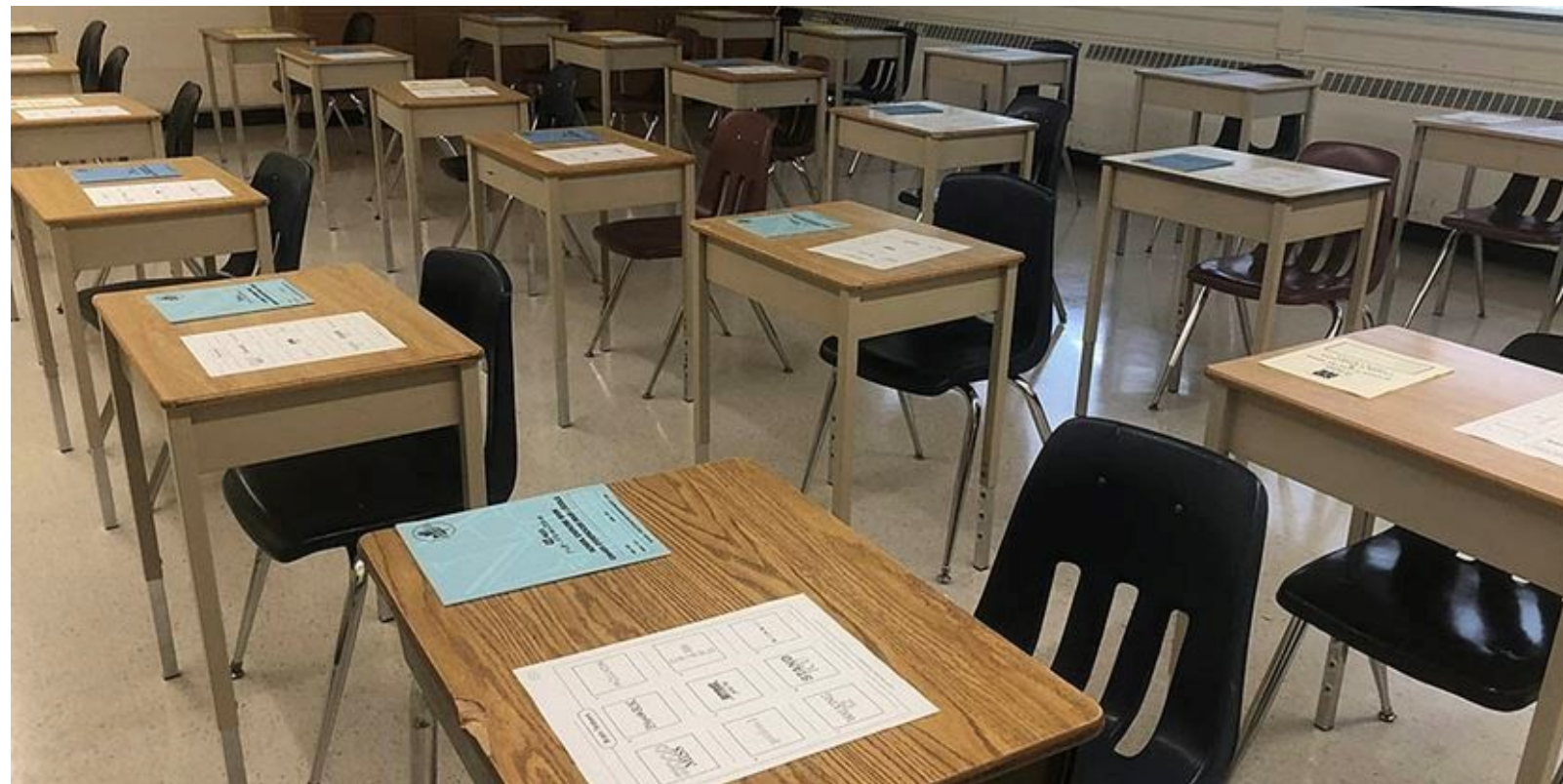
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School boards work to keep class sizes at or below government levels Motion to cap class sizes at 15 to reduce spread of COVID-19 fails to receive support at Queen's Park

News 08:00 AM by [Catherine Whitnall \(/kawartha-author/catherine-whitnall/1E0E6AE6-EB40-4A3C-A4A9-CC957BF70779/\)](#) 
<mailto:cwhitnall@mykawartha.com> Kawartha Lakes This Week



There may only be 22 students in this Grade 7/8 class, but there clearly is not two metres separating the desks, not to mention the added impact of backpacks and, as the weather cools, winter coats. An NDP motion to cap class sizes at 15 failed to garner support at Queen's Park on Sept. 17. - Wendy Goodes photo

As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools continues to rise in some communities, so have the voices urging the provincial government to limit class sizes.

The total cumulative cases in Ontario, as of Sept. 18, includes 25 students and 22 staff members. Fellowes High School in Pembroke was closed after three confirmed cases were reported.

According to the Hospital for Sick Children report for the safe reopening of schools, it was recommended that smaller class sizes be a priority as it would aid in physical distancing and reduce potential spread, with schools developing class sizes to a maximum of 15 students. It was suggested that, where needed, non-traditional spaces could be used to accommodate classes.

Although provincial funding has been provided to school boards, along with the loosening of restrictions regarding the use of reserve funds and hundreds of parents opting to keep their children home, most classrooms sit above the recommended limit.

On Sept. 17, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath tabled a motion that would have forced the government to limit class sizes across the province to 15. It came as Premier Doug Ford announced a reduction in social gathering limits for COVID-19, slashing the limits from 50 people inside and 100 outside down to just 10 indoors and 25 outdoors.

"If we're concerned about social distancing, if we believe that it's necessary for people, especially indoors, to keep a distance of two metres, then why on earth aren't we protecting the health and safety of our children in the same way," stated Horwath.

The motion failed to pass in the legislature by a vote of 54 to 29.

Local school boards are doing their best to mitigate risk while complying to public health and government safety protocols when it comes to classrooms.

"As we have created our new virtual school, our emphasis has been to keep virtual classrooms as large as possible so that we could keep our in-person classes smaller as much as possible," said Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board communications manager Galen Eagle, noting, as of Sept. 15, all of in-person classrooms are compliant - many are actually below - Ministry of Education requirements.

The board currently has an average of 22.23 students in full day kindergarten and 18.57 in grades 1 to 3. The Ministry compliance requirement is 26 and 20 respectively. Grades 4 to 8 average 22.73 students per class - below the 24.5 required by the Ministry - and 21.66 for high school classes; this is normally 23. These numbers refer to both in school and virtual classrooms.

Similar numbers are being reported for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

"While there may be individual instances of some classes increasing slightly, our class size averages across the board have been reduced in all areas for in-person classrooms," said Greg Kidd, senior manager of corporate affairs.

Kindergarten classes sit at 21.45, grades 1 to 3 at 19.3 and those in 4 to 8 average 22.88 students. High school classes average 18.8 students.

Virtual school class size averages are 26.7 for elementary and 27 for secondary.

As for Trillium Lakelands District School Board class sizes, communications officer Sinead Fegan said the exact numbers are not currently available.

"Enrolment data will be shared when we have our official count submission after our Oct. 31 report to the Ministry," said Fegan, noting, typically this is a report that comes to the board in January. "In saying that, all class sizes fall within Ministry guidelines for class sizes."

by [Catherine Whitnall](https://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/10204013-school-boards-work-to-keep-class-sizes-at...) ([/kawartha-author/Catherine-Whitnall/1e0e6ae6-eb40-4a3c-a4a9-cc957bf70779/](https://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/10204013-school-boards-work-to-keep-class-sizes-at...))

Catherine Whitnall is a reporter with MyKawartha. She can be reached at cwhitnall@mykawartha.com (<mailto:cwhitnall@mykawartha.com>). Follow her on [Twitter \(https://twitter.com/kltwwhitnall\)](https://twitter.com/kltwwhitnall) and MyKawartha on [Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/KawarthaLakesThisWeek\)](https://www.facebook.com/KawarthaLakesThisWeek)

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