

THE LINDSAY ADVOCATE
KAWARTHA LAKES' FINEST MAGAZINE

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Union disputes letter sent to TLDSB parents about teacher online training

Published on January 6, 2021 — in Education — by Kirk Winter

Colin Matthew, president of District 15 of the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's

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Federation, is upset that the Trillium Lakelands District School Board forwarded a letter from the Minister of Education to parents with important contextual errors unchallenged and uncorrected.

The Jan. 2 press release, received by parents and guardians yesterday, stated that, “to ensure a better learning experience every teacher in the province received mandatory training on remote learning before the school year began.”



Matthew, in an interview with the *Advocate* said, “The link was forwarded with no disclaimer suggesting that there was inaccurate information. The board forwarded the note intact.”

“To my knowledge,” Matthew continued, “no board has provided (mandatory) training on distance learning for their staff.”

“Voluntary training is available,” Matthew said, “with a dedicated consultant and webinars available through the board, but none of this is mandatory. Teaching is a full time job and no paid time has been provided for staff to train (for virtual learning). There is no time between lesson prep and assessments for staff to engage in this.”

Matthew also wondered about the iron-clad guarantee provided by the minister that, “schools are not a source of rising community transmission.”

“Their leading health experts are hand-picked and there are many out there who suggest otherwise,” Matthew said.

When asked about the certainty of high school students returning to in-person learning on Jan. 25 Matthew said, “It’s

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impossible to guess. The case counts certainly aren't going down. I can see a scenario where elementary students are back but secondary schools remain closed beyond Jan. 25."

The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario is trying to go over the premier's head in their appeal to public health units to keep schools shuttered after Jan. 11.

"Given that the government has failed in their responsibility to protect Ontarians ETFO is calling upon Medical Officers of Health to do what they have been entrusted to do – to prioritize community health and safety over politics," said Sam Hammond, leader of the public elementary union.

"Educators know that in-person learning provides the most effective and equitable learning environment, but we are at the height of the pandemic."

Hammond added, "It makes no sense for the government to send students and education workers back to school while the province is locked down for the next two to three weeks. With vaccines slowly being rolled out we must ensure that we do everything we can to protect those who are most vulnerable."

TLDSB was contacted for comment but none was forthcoming by publication time.

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