

THE LINDSAY ADVOCATE

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Union says Ford government needs to do five things to get schools ready to open again

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The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) says the provincial Conservative government's decision to close schools today because of the surging pandemic is only the first step of what should happen next.

Ontario schools will stay closed indefinitely to in-person learning as the pandemic surges in Ontario to levels not seen before.

Premier Doug Ford just announced this Monday afternoon along with Education Minister Stephen Lecce – just 24 hours after Lecce had said schools were safe to resume classes after the break.

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squandered.”

As they have been doing for more than a year, a media release from the Catholic teachers calls on Ford to do the following:

- prioritize the vaccination of teachers, education workers, and other essential workers in hot spots;
- realize smaller class sizes, to allow for proper physical distancing;
- implement a comprehensive and meaningful asymptomatic testing program for schools that serves the needs and encourages the participation of everyone in the community;
- improve ventilation in schools; and
- ensure paid sick days for all Ontarians, to stop the spread of COVID-19 among frontline workers and to save lives.

“As the third wave intensifies, a result of the Ford government’s underfunded and mismanaged COVID-19 response, this action is necessary to protect the health and well-being of our students, teachers, education workers, families, and communities,” says OECTA President Liz Stuart.

“We all want schools to be open and stay open,” says Stuart. “Ironically, the Ford government’s haphazard handling of this crisis has provided yet another opportunity to implement stronger health and safety measures, to protect not only our classrooms, but all Ontarians. It cannot be

“This was not a decision we made lightly, as we know how critical schools are to Ontario students,” said Lecce in a media release.

“Our priority has always been to keep schools open, however sharply rising community transmission can put our schools and Ontario families at risk,” he said.

“While Ontario’s plan has kept schools safe...we are taking decisive and preventative action today to ensure students can safely return to learning in our schools.”

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