

Special Board Meeting

Monday, 14 March 2022

List of Written Delegations

1. Sherri MacLeod	
2. Alex Smith	
3. Valerie Boutet	
4. Bernadette Debay	
5. Ghewa Ghandour	
6. Jaime Trick	
7. Engy Sedki	
8. Steven Williams	
9. Masuma Khan	
10. David Hare	
11. Danielle Sampson	
12. Samantha Martin	
13. Katie Gibbs	
14. Lisa Daley	
15. Jesse Cressman-Dickson	
16. Tanya Nayler	
17. Kim Miller	
18. Nicole Blundell	
19. Anna Sweet	
20. Christian Slanina	
21. Scott Miller	
22. Michael O'Hare	
23. James Graham	
24. Yoni Freedhoff	

1. Sherri MacLeod

Hello OCDSB Trustees,

I appreciate the opportunity to explain our family's story, for your consideration.

We just, on February 28, after nearly 2 years, sent our 5 year old to in-person school, and our 2 year old to daycare. We had kept everyone at home at tremendous cost to our family because I am at risk of severe COVID. With our mental health fraying, all but the youngest vaccinated (and vaccine for her months away at best), and omicron seemingly on the downswing, but certainly not gone, we finally felt comfortable to increase our risk. We did not, however, sign up for an unmasked school environment, at least not so soon. We did not anticipate an unmasked community feeding into the school system so soon. Some of the safeguards we relied upon to make this decision are being lifted without debate, in direct conflict with the advice of trusted experts.

I urge you to consider acting on whatever is within Board authority to keep students, staff and families - many of whom are still vulnerable to this virus - safe until we have a lower level in the community.

Thank you for holding this meeting, and for considering the challenges these circumstances present for many vulnerable families.

Sherri MacLeod

2. Alex Smith

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Hi,

The indoor mask mandate in schools should be lifted in schools after the March Break. Students and Staff have had enough of the masks for 2 years. It is time for them to come off completely. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has done the research and the science properly. If the mask mandate is reinstated in schools, and NOT approved by the Ontario Government, I will be going mask-less in schools, because that is what the Government has said.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Don't reinstate the mask mandate in schools. Plain and simple.

Date: *

3/11/2022

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3. Valerie Boutet

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Written delegation: The dropping of mask mandates is not unexpected. It is not coming out of left field, at least not to anyone who has been paying the least bit of attention. The majority of European countries, all US states, and now several Canadian provinces are dropping their restrictions. The pleas of "why so soon" are disingenuous. What will have changed 2 weeks after March break? We do not need the extra time so the schools can "prepare" the students. As their parents, WE are in the best position to prepare them, and thankfully we have a whole week ahead of us to do so. I understand that some see the school board as the last resort to save them from other children's unmasked smiles, but this is not the board's place.

I see a lot of concern that the children who choose to remain masked may become victims of bullying. I have yet to learn of a single example of this from any of the many places that have removed their mandates, but I'm sure there must have been some isolated incidents. What I have seen, however, are teachers from the GTA and probably beyond openly discussing online their plans to segregate (their word, not mine), guilt trip, isolate, and shame their students if they come to class unmasked. One teacher outright threatened their students with what amounted to a subpar education (I believe the tweet said no hands-on or group work, expect a lot of writing sheets since you won't be able to hear me anyway through my double-masks). Is this acceptable? I sure hope not. But I would propose that turning the question of when to remove mask mandates into yet another battle that must be fought between those who are ready and those who are nervous, as opposed to the next step we take as a community toward a more normal existence that is long overdue for the youngest members of our society who have shouldered a disproportionate burden, contributes to the climate that allowed these teachers to believe that they were in the right to write such vile things.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Thankfully, anyone who is concerned about transmission can purchase N95's. A properly-fitted N95 is highly effective at protecting the wearer, and does not rely on the behavior of others around you for protection. High-quality one-way masking is more effective at protecting the vulnerable than universal use of low-quality masks. I assume that this is why teachers pushed so hard for the province to provide them in January.

I don't think that there is a single serious doctor out there today who still thinks that covid can or will be ever eliminated. It will be with us forever. Restrictive policies increase fear & falsely convey that schools are unsafe. This increases harm to student mental health, which can have major detrimental effects. If you are successful in implementing a board-specific extension to the masking mandate, school will be the only regularly frequented place where children are forced to wear a mask. But as soon as the bell rings, they will go over to each other's houses, they will visit family and friends, attend their extracurricular activities or part-time jobs, go to malls & restaurants & events- unmasked. They do not disappear when they are not in school. So what difference does it make, really? Is this helping them learn to read? Is this teaching them to accurately identify each other's emotional cues? Or does it passively teach them that their joy and their smiles are not worth seeing?

It's time to let this one go.

Date: *

3/12/2022

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4. Bernadette Debay

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

covid changes in classrooms. i AGREE with the removing of masks and no teacher or board member speaks for my family that wants to keep my kids faces hidden

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

do not try to change the masking rules. masks havent helped anything and for cases like my kids have only made things worse for social skills, speach and language skills, self esteem, and physicaly with their little faces getting rashes from mask wearing all day long. its not ok. please vote to EN THE RESTICTIONS. i do not feel that my familys "vaccination status" should deem wether my children haave an education and by forcing this on us all you are proving it is not a choice and never was.

Date: *

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5. Ghewa Ghandour

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Good morning,

This is regarding the masking in schools.

I am baffled this is being debated despite the provincial mandate.

For 2 years we followed mandates and top doctors advice without hesitation. Top doctors including Dr etches on many occasions said schools are not a source of transmission.

We are heading into nice weather where windows and doors can be left open if that satisfies some basis, what is the point of keeping the masks? Why are we hold on to something the world around us is dropping, I don't understand the drive nor the logic.

Please follow the provincial government mandate and stop making kids wear those masks.

Thank you.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

No more masks

Date: *

3/14/2022

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Keep Mandatory Masking

Thank you trustees for taking time to have this special meeting to discuss maintaining mandatory masking. I recognize that these meetings are time-consuming and that this term of your leadership has been demanding and unprecedented.

The decisions trustees at OCDSB have made throughout the pandemic have set precedent in Ontario and have directly led to the Province having safer schools. Thank you.

In February 2018, my perfectly healthy, influenza-vaccinated 2.5 year old son was hospitalized for Influenza B. He spent 7 days in CHEO and fortunately recovered - but, in an instant, our family became that “very unlikely case.” We were statistically rare, and lucky, but the reality of seeing a child that ill that quickly is etched forever in my mind. Even at very low percentages, *it's someone's child*. Now in 2022, he is a very healthy 6.5 year old, with no underlying conditions - but kids get COVID; vaccinated kids get COVID and previously-infected kids can get COVID again. Neither infection nor vaccination reduces your chances of getting COVID to zero. BUT, masking, especially with high quality masks - (*almost*) DOES! **...and any mask is better than none:

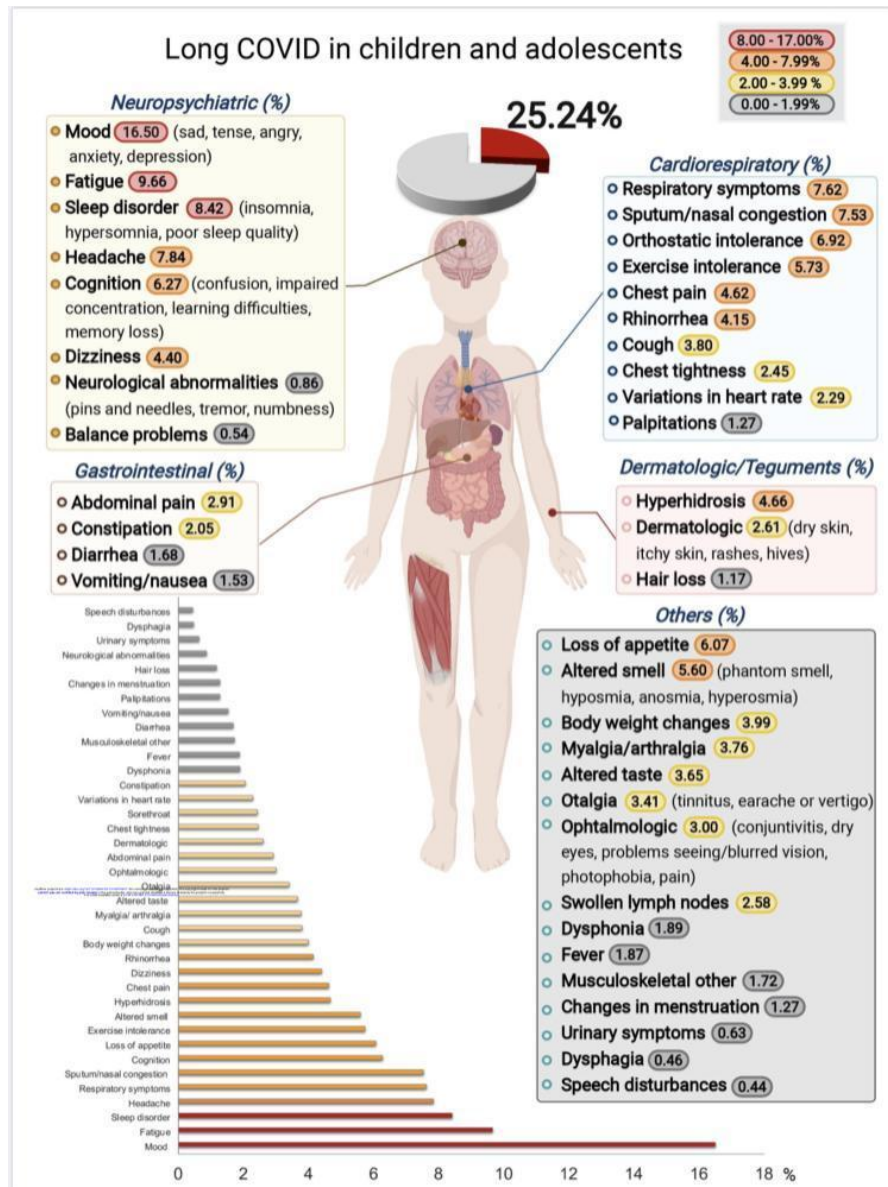
<https://mobile.twitter.com/akm5376/status/1479042619418177536?s=21>

(**aside, the long-term solution would be to clean the air we breathe, similarly to how we developed water-treatment solutions in the time of cholera. Since COVID isn't going anywhere, it's time for engineering solutions to clean the air we breathe)

But then people say: “Why try to stop people from getting covid if those who are vaccinated and those who have had COVID can get it again?”

BECAUSE LONG-COVID and LONG TERM SEQUELAE from even asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic cases. A recent study shows that 25% of covid infections in children and adolescents leads to long-COVID. That's a lot of kids. Article here:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.03.10.22272237v1>



Research (listed at the end) shows *ANY* covid infection can have *lasting* heart/liver/kidney disease; brain damage/loss; increased incidence of strokes/clotting issues; sustained lung damage; increased Type 1 diabetes; fatigue/memory/concentration issues; MISC in children.

Did you know that previous infection with HPV16 or HPV18 is the leading cause of cervical cancer? Chronic H. pylori infection leads to stomach cancer? Previous chickenpox infection can induce shingles later in life? Full list of infections that lead to other diseases/sequelae later in life: <https://twitter.com/epiellie/status/1500848087207759873?s=21>

Public Health should be advocating for individuals to try to NOT get the virus - and certainly not multiple times. Multi-layer approach is still required:
vaccine + mask + clean/filter the air + control transmission = success.

Dismantling COVID protections won't bring us back 2019. In the absence of testing, tracing and with shortened isolation, **MASKS** are the last universal protection that schools and WE have. The world has changed and COVID is not over despite what you are hearing from our government and the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Ontario has chosen to prioritize the economy despite strong, countless studies that COVID harms many people, even those without hospitalization. Vaccination prevents against death, but not against long-term damage. Your first COVID infection can leave you with pre-existing conditions that will make you more vulnerable to subsequent infections. This is why ***WE MUST CONTINUE TO CARE AND CONTINUE TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN!***

Most of Europe dropped all COVID protections 4-6 weeks ago and we are now seeing the start of wave 6. We are no different here in Canada and Ontario and we will see the same thing if we don't keep any mitigations in place.

<https://twitter.com/dickzoutman/status/1503089206402424836?s=21>

Reasons to keep masks:

1. Kids under the age of 5 are unvaccinated. Completely susceptible to long-COVID and long-term COVID sequelae
2. Kids between 5-11 have considerably lower vaccination rates than those 12+ across Ontario
3. New evidence suggests significant waning of vaccine in 5-11 year olds after only 5 weeks after the second shot (most in this age group would be 5 weeks+ now)
4. Students/staff do not exist in a vacuum - some students have immunocompromised siblings, parents, grandparents.
5. Long-covid risks from ANY covid infection. Mounting evidence suggests significant sequelae and long-term implications of even asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic cases - heart/liver/kidney disease; brain damage/loss; increased incidence of strokes/clotting issues; sustained lung damage; increased Type 1 diabetes; fatigue/memory/concentration issues; MISC in children.
6. Masking is the simplest measure to keep in place.
7. Universities and private schools are keeping masking because they know it works; they don't want disrupted school settings and they are protecting their staff, students and community

<https://ontariosuniversities.ca/cou-statement-covid-19-vaccination-and-masking-policies>

<https://twitter.com/thatprgirl/status/1502660994492948480?s=21>

Over time, the effects of COVID on heart, brain, lungs, vascular system, sensory system, kidneys & more will become better understood. Until then, any reassurance that massive levels of infection are 'ok' for society is a gamble - a gamble with unknown long-term costs. Masks are the simplest mitigation strategy we have.

Sincerely,

Jaime Trick
Parent of OCDSB student
Physiotherapist

RESEARCH ON THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF COVID:

Type 1 Diabetes in Kids:

<https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-1374347/v1>

Long Covid in Kids:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.03.10.22272237v1>

Recent work highlighting effects of SARSCoV2 on brain structure:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-04569-5>

Risk of heart disease, heart attacks, strokes sig higher even after mild cases of COVID19

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00403-0>

Increased risk of clot formation due to secondary inflammation:

<https://www.npr.org/2022/01/09/1071706533/the-role-of-tiny-blood-clots-in-long-covid>

Long-term effects on kidneys:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41581-021-00487-3>

Effects on ability to smell and taste:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/covid-smell-loss-and-long-covid-linked-to-inflammation1/?amp=true>

Lung disease and long-COVID: ongoing shortness of breath or decreased lung capacity

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-60154398.amp>

7. Engy Sedki

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I have a four year old in JK who is not yet eligible to be vaccinated. Masks are a small thing that she and others can protect themselves against COVID, and it's long term effects. Without them, she will have to continue to isolate from grandparents and other vulnerable family members.

Many of our children have been wearing masks for more than half their lives. They are unphased and unbothered by them. What's a couple more months?!

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

I urge the OCDSB to make the responsible decision to continue masking for the remainder of the school year.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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8. Steven Williams

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Certain members of the board, parents, teachers, believe that continuing the mask mandate for the OCDSB is the right way forward. I do not agree with this. Throughout the entire pandemic we have listened to elected officials doctors, and specialists who have been pointing in the right direction. Nobody has the right to override the provincial government based on how they feel. No one has any proof that either way will be better or worse and they never have through the entire pandemic. We have managed to fumble our way through this for two years and this is where we're at. I have no problem with anyone wearing masks, but that becomes a personal choice after our elected officials have given us the guidance to take them off. I would like to attend and hear some of the viewpoints of the members so that freedom of choice does not get bowled over.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Let individuals make the choice on their own personal hygiene and care. Anyone who is in the board who is older than five years old will remember that in the old world we let people take care of their own personal hygiene. If they decided to pick their nose and wipe it on their sleeve that was what we let them do. Now we wanna control every single thing. It is time to let people make the choice on their own. To wear a mask or not it should be a choice. Not a mandate since the mandates will be dropped.

Date: *

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9. Masuma Khan

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I am concerned for the safety of our community with the removal of cohorting and masks right after March Break. Many families will be traveling during the break making it a ripe time to increase the spread of Covid. By removing masks and cohorting exactly when we expect covid transmissions to increase, I am afraid that we will have an exponential increase of covid that will stress our community health systems

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Rather than remove all measures at once, I would recommend we keep measures for the first week after spring break and then slowly peel back the measures one at a time to prevent a huge spike

Date: *

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10. David Hare

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

As the parent of a 4 year old JK student (and a one year old at home), who cannot be vaccinated, I am concerned with the lifting of mandatory mask use in schools. Masking is a simple, non-invasive way to reduce transmission of COVID.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Keep mandatory masking until, at the very least, 4 year olds are eligible for vaccination.

Date: *

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11. Danielle Sampson

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I would strongly urge the members of the Board to ensure that masks are mandatory on school property after March break. My son is 4 years old and I have a daughter that is 14 months. We all got COVID in 2021. My daughter was just 4 months old at the time, my son was three. Their father was almost hospitalized, and while the kids exhibited generally mild symptoms, nothing has been more terrifying as a mother than to watch your newborn and toddler go through this while worrying about what happens if you get too sick to care for them. We have no family and no support here in Ottawa. Our kids are too young to be vaccinated yet.

My son has grown up knowing that putting your mask on is part of getting ready for school, it's like putting on your mittens or your sunscreen. It's normal to them now. If he sees the older, vaccinated kids removing their masks, he will want to do it too. It's like watching Pokemon, or playing rough in the school yard. He wants to be like the older kids in his class. I would ask that masks be in place until all little kids can get vaccinated.

I have seen a lot about people doing what's "Comfortable for them" and to "assess their own comfort levels" but teachers, students, crossing guards - their masks protect my son too when he's in close contact with them. It's not just their comfort level, it's about the whole community. We protect each other

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Please vote in favour of continuing mandatory masks in schools

Date: *

3/14/2022

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12. Samantha Martin

Good Morning,

I am writing today as a concerned mother regarding the meeting today March 14, 2022 at 7pm the OCDSB plans to have to set a motion for continuing with masking mandates beyond March 21, 2022.

I understand being in your position right now can not be easy and one I would not wish to be in. However, I am asking you to please accept the Provincial Governments decision in lifting the mask mandates in the schools. **The decision to wear a mask after March 21, 2022 is up to the parent.** The teachers and board directors and trustees are not the parents of these children and should not get to make such decisions for other people's children.

In recent articles there has been talks of teachers segregating children in groups of mask/unmask or unvaccinated/vaccinated which will create such hate and division in children that should never be taught! We would never segregate children based on any other factor in their life. Why would this even be said by teachers is beyond me and frankly I believe they do not belong in a classroom with our children.

Our children that are in classrooms with split grades levels have been kept away from friends in other classes during recess due to your cohorting. The fun pizza days, popcorn days, sports, assemblies, concerts, fundraising activities, and community events have been taken away from these children for far too long and it is time that they get back to the childhood they all deserve.

As the rest of Ontario sets to unmask on March 21, 2022 the OCDSB is being selfish and using other people's children to levy for their wants. The provincial government has stated that all school boards are to follow the guidelines of our Chief Medical Officer. Our Chief Medical officer has stated that it is time to learn to live with COVID-19. As the rest of the world is moving on and living with COVID-19 it is time for Ontario to open up and get back to it

Thank you,
Samantha Martin

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13. Katie Gibbs

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Dear trustees,

I am very concerned about the plan to remove mandatory masking in schools on March 21st. My 5-year-old is in SK. Given the low vaccination rates for the 5-11 age group and that there is currently no vaccination available for kids under 5, it is likely that only a quarter of the kids in his class are vaccinated for covid. Masks are an essential layer of protection in reducing the spread of covid in our schools, and they work best when everyone is wearing them. We also have a 2-year-old at home who is too young to get a covid vaccine.

While of course, we all want our kids to get back to having a normal school experience, many scientists and experts have warned that March 21st is too early to remove mandatory masking. Dr. Peter Juni, scientific director of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table, and the Children's Health Coalition, a collective of children's health organizations in Ontario, have both said that March 21st is too soon to remove mandatory masking.

It is my hope that OCDSB will choose to listen to the science and prioritize the health of our children by keeping mandatory masking in schools for a little longer.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Extend mandatory masking until at least mid-April, with a plan to review the covid situation at that time.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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14. Lisa Daley

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Understanding that the board is in a position to have to respond to provincial direction as the lifting of covid protocols, I would like to know what the school board is doing to help protect kids who have not yet been able to get vaccinated? Ontario Universities have decided to keep mask mandates in place until the end of the term (with their student population having a vaccination rate around 98%). Will the school board also do the same to protect their students with a much lower vaccination rate?

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Option 1 - follow the same direction as Ontario universities and maintain covid safety protocols, including masks, until the end of the term or when a reasonable amount of time has passed to determine the impact of these changes.

Option 2 - have kids under 5 adhere to masking and other covid safety measures (cohorting, sanitizing, screening) until the end of the term.

Date: *

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15. Jesse Cressman-Dickson

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Removal of masks in schools starting March 21.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

I encourage our trustees to continue to explore ways to lift the mask requirements in schools in a cautious, step wise way that follows the advice of our medical experts.

Representatives from the Ontario Science Table and the coalition of children's hospitals have all advocated for waiting at least two weeks following March break.

We have reason to be cautiously optimistic. Let's guard our gains.

Date: *

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16. Tanya Nayler

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I am writing as a parent of a junior kindergarten student who, like many of his classmates, is not eligible yet for vaccination due to age. My son, like many of his classmates, has a younger sibling at home who also cannot be vaccinated yet and is at higher risk of severe illness.

I am deeply concerned about the provincial plan to no longer require masks in schools. This change is contrary to the recommendations of the Children's Health Alliance which is made up of children's hospitals in Ontario, including CHEO. The Children's Health Alliance released a statement on February 28, 2022 calling for masking in schools to be maintained. The statement acknowledged that masking remains an important layer of protection and is still required to protect children and their families. Since that date, the Children's Health Alliance has released two additional statements calling for masking to be maintained in schools for a minimum of two weeks after March Break to allow time to assess the impacts of relaxing other public health measures.

Despite these recommendations, and a previous statement by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health that masking may continue longer in schools than other settings to maintain confidence of parents, staff, and students, the province is proceeding recklessly by lifting the school mask mandate on March 21, 2022. This decision will subject students, staff, and their families to unnecessary risk.

Throughout the pandemic, the risk to children has been minimized by decision makers. However, COVID-19 continues to present a risk to children, particularly those too young to be vaccinated. Sadly, 13 Ontarians aged 19 and under have died due to COVID-19 and 1279 have been hospitalized.

Further, the Government of Canada has acknowledged that a significant number of children may be affected by "post-COVID condition" with about 58% of children reporting at least one symptom more than 4 weeks after their initial COVID infection.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

(cont'd) These symptoms can include fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, and difficulty thinking or concentrating. It seems plausible such symptoms would have an impact on student performance.

In addition, it is not clear yet what long-term health consequences infection with COVID-19 may have. Many viruses have been found to result in serious health issues years later (ex. HPV causes several types of cancer, mono is associated with multiple sclerosis, etc). When it comes to the health of children, decision makers should take a precautionary approach to minimize the risk of infection.

While masking may still be encouraged after March 21, some will discontinue mask use and that will increase the risk for those around them. Two-way masking has been shown to be more protective than one-way masking. Further, parents who want their children to continue masking may encounter resistance when peers stop wearing masks. Others may see increased anxiety in their child around attending school once masks are no longer required as I expect to see with my son.

As a parent of two young children through this pandemic, I have felt the weight of decision fatigue from the constant need to evaluate the risks and benefits of activities. The recent provincial announcements have again left me weighing the risks to my children's health against the benefit of in-person learning.

I strongly believe the school board should do everything in its power to ensure masking continues in schools after March Break to protect students, staff, and their families. It is worth noting that the requirement for masking in kindergarten was a result of action by the OCDSB Board of Trustees and not a part of the provincial mandate. As many kindergarten students remain too young to be vaccinated, it is particularly important for the Board to clarify whether that requirement will still be in force on March 21, 2022.

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17. Kim Miller

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I'm against imposing a mask mandate in schools as of March 21 when Provincial one expires

Trustees should be seen as a role model and going against the Ontario Chief Medical Officer is setting a poor example to students, that it is okay to not respect authority and governments and Science.

Special needs kids are suffering trying to wear masks. My child needs glasses to read/write. He has not been able to wear them for 2 years cause he can't wear them with a mask due to fogging. His education has suffered and he cannot get those 2 years back.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Please vote against making mask mandate.

Anyone that wants to be vaccinated, is vaccinated. Children are at low risk for covid (no deaths and recover quick).

As a parent, I'm letting my high school student decide what she wants to do when she goes back to school. She is almost an adult, and it is part of growing up to MAKE CHOICES. The trustees should not have that power to make a choice for my child.

Educate that is okay to wear a mask, bullying is not acceptable. Education is best.

My special needs child needs to be able to wear glasses to be able to learn. Lost almost 2 years now. they can't do online either. Can they be given 2 more years in school to make up for the lost time? They don't catch up like other kids. I know his mask is not protecting him at all. His masks is gross at the end of day, I can't see this protecting him against anything!

Date: *

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18. Nicole Blundell

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I am a parent of 3 children and a teacher (not at your Board) and I would like to speak in support of removing masks. I would like the OCDSB to continue to take direction from OPH and not pick and choose what information best suits their agenda. For children with learning disabilities mask are a barrier to education.

Thank you. Nicole

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Please follow the provincial medical officer of health and OPH directives and remove masks.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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19. Anna Sweet

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I feel very strongly about having the opportunity for kids to stop wearing masks at school. This has gone on long enough- I agree it was important at first and served the purpose well, however it is time to give kids the choice to wear them, not mandate this anymore.

The chance of transmission is incredibly low amongst the younger demographic. The Catholic board is letting this go- why is the public system any different? It's not.

If people wish to wear masks then let's them, if others choose not to, they should have that choice.

We have all jumped through the hoops, have masked and been vaccinated and boosted. Let people have the freedom to finally exercise their own right to choose for themselves!

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Allow kids and families to make their own choice on whether they wish to mask or not already.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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20. Christian Slanina

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I want to voice our families concern about extending the mask wearing in class. Our kids don't want to wear masks and we as a family don't believe in the necessity of them.

Most of all our kids both complain about the masks and how uncomfortable they are and how much they hinder them in learning.

At this point it is enough with the false protectionism and the majority of people do not wear mask in their daily lives, why do we make children suffer.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Follow the provincial masking policy and follow medical advise that masks are not helping anymore and society needs to move on and live with the virus.

Date: *

3/12/2022

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21. Scott Miller

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I strongly object to the introduction of any board mask mandate.

Masking should be voluntary and accepted, but not mandated.

There was never any science behind the introduction of mandatory masking in a classroom environment, and certainly not for anything less than N95. Now that the provincial mandate is over, there is absolutely no reason to introduce a mandate at the board level.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Vote against any such motion.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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22. Michael O'Hare

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

I submit that facemasks must not be made mandatory at OCDSB schools. The scientific data does not support a mandate for mask usage. At best the science shows that masks have a small effect on preventing transmission.

For the first time in my voting lifetime I will be paying attention to who is running for election as school board trustee in the next election and my vote will go to someone who is against a mask mandate and who believes our children need to be allowed to attend school and live normally. The risk that covid presents to children is so small that it does not require any special measures. Please allow our children to feel normal again.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Vote against any mask mandates. Let the children live again.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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23. James Graham

Please provide a brief summary of main points for the issue/concern: *

Legal Services and Labour Relations have finally come to their senses and requested an immediate repeal of the motions regarding mandatory Covid-19 vaccines for employees and visitors. I trust you will all have been provided with the legal advice and understand that this must be immediately repealed, and correctly vote to have these policies rescinded, effective immediately.

The motion put forward by Rob Campbell is unjustifiable. This board has considered something very similar in the fall when it rejected writing to the ministry of education, a letter advocating mandatory Covid-19 injections be added to the list of mandatory vaccinations for children attending school.

When did the Trustees become so knowledgeable about public health, that they feel empowered to demand policy requirements beyond what is now recommended?

After providing sufficient advice that proves masks, beyond a reasonable doubt, do not provide any substantial reduction in risk, you continue to advocate for required masking?

This board has never ever entertained that the masks have a detrimental effect on learning. That's an awful reality that each Trustee should be ashamed of. It shows an utter lack of respect for the student. Your continued ignorance of the damage done by masks is appalling.

It's embarrassing to watch this board advocate for further restrictions after years of unnecessarily masking the children. It's not ok to think you have the right to further infringe on students rights. These masks are doing nothing at all, and you must now accept this truth.

It's important to realize masks do more harm than good. They are gross factories for breeding bacteria and restrict oxygen intake.

Studies and supporting evidence:

<https://principia-scientific.com/covid-19-masks-causing-rise-in-bacterial-pneumonia/>

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/VARIOUS-FACE-MASK-STUDIES-PROVE-THEIR-INEFFECTIVENESS-PDF.pdf>

<https://swprs.org/face-masks-and-covid-the-evidence/>

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue: *

Vote to support immediate rescinding of all Covid-19 vaccine policies for staff and visitors

Vote against the motion to write a letter to the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Date: *

3/14/2022

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24. Yoni Freedhoff

March 14th, 2022

Dear OCDSB trustees,

I am writing to you today to encourage you to continue the requirement of masking in schools until at the very least 2 weeks after the end of March break so as to allow for a bare minimum of time to assess the impact of both the break, and the growth of BA.2 in Ontario before stripping students and staff of their best physical defence against COVID.

As I'm certain you're aware, the decision to end school mask mandates is not one supported by science as is evidenced by the fact that both the Ontario Science Table and the Children's Health Coalition have described the move as premature and have warned that following through on same will risk in person learning and child well-being.

The removal of school mask mandates risks all students and staff as the preponderance of evidence identifies universal masking as beneficial in decreasing COVID's airborne transmission. Removing school mask mandates would also increase inequity by putting those children who are themselves immunocompromised or otherwise vulnerable to more severe courses of acute illness at greater risk, as well as risking the families of students who live in multigenerational homes, or in homes where a parent or sibling themselves are immunocompromised or are at otherwise heightened risk of more severe acute courses, or in homes with children under 5. It will also likely lead to bullying of those children who continue to mask for themselves and others.

We shouldn't only look to severe outcomes though. We can't and don't know the long-term risks of even mild courses of COVID on children as here we are discussing a disease that has only existed for just over 2 years. Assuming that there won't be long term consequences is unwise given both the experiences currently being reported in both adults and kids with lingering courses and complications, but also from other viral illnesses that in turn lead to long term complications that could not have been predicted without the benefit of decades of surveillance and research like for instance with cervical cancer and the human papilloma virus.

Ontario is also hamstrung in understanding our current disease burden due to our marked purposeful reduction in available symptomatic testing, our lack of contact tracing, and our lack of a mechanism through which to report our positive rapid test results. Currently our percent positivity is on the upswing as are hospitalizations, and despite markedly lowered test numbers, we're still documenting more positive daily cases than we did at the peaks of all pre-Omicron surges where testing capacity had been preserved. There are also more deaths from COVID each day in Canada right now than there were on an average day in 2021. As to the "mildness" of Omicron – one third of the past 26 months of this epidemic's most severe outcomes have been reported over the past 3 months.

Our best defense against COVID, vaccination, has stalled at 2 doses for nearly 50% of 12+ children and while our 5-12 year olds see an 86% rate of 2 doses, they have yet to be offered

access to 3rd doses. And while 3rd doses do appear to be crucial in helping to reduce risk of both contracting and transmitting COVID, we also know that immunity wanes with the real likelihood now looking as if within 3-6 months, the benefits from those 3rd doses will be markedly diminished. What doesn't diminish however, is the ability of masks, especially higher quality masks, to reduce risk, nor would we ever expect it to as regardless of the evolution of future variants, they won't evolve a way to defeat the laws of physics.

It is also worth pointing out that viruses do not preferentially evolve to become less virulent and given our markedly decreased surveillance due to our markedly decreased testing and virtual elimination of contact tracing, continuing with masking may help blunt our inevitable next surge. I say inevitable purposefully as we have since day one had the advantage of a global crystal ball to see what's coming, and China, our original bellwether, is once again closing schools and locking down cities.

And it's not just China. COVID rates were reported as rising in 21 countries yesterday, up from a rise in 13 countries on March 5th. Some countries who opened things up as widely as we now have here are experiencing marked upticks in hospitalizations and deaths including more highly boosted Denmark, Finland, and the UK. Average daily deaths by the way, are rising again in Canada as well.

And of course, wholly unsurprisingly, there are reports of new variants – and while most will not amount to much, it's only a matter of time before something new truly takes over, and with all protective measures removed, minimal surveillance, and a government seemingly putting politics ahead of public health, it will likely rip through our unprotected schools and community.

Schools who can, seem to nearly uniformly be continuing to require masking – from universities to private elementary and high schools, and though I'm not a lawyer, Professor Attaran has noted that which is not prohibited by the Education Act is allowed, like dress codes, and the Education Act has not been amended to prohibit mandatory masking. I have also heard it proposed that school boards may be named in lawsuits on behalf of parents who can't arrange virtual schooling for the rest of the year and have a reason to require a mask free classroom.

While we all want this nightmare to be over, prematurely pretending that it is will only make it worse – both in the near term with what will inevitably include a surge in BA.2, and in the mid to late term when the next variant hits. Schools certainly should be the first to open and the last to close, and maybe if school boards in fact did what they could to protect their students' and staff' safety they would be (and while I still have your attention, maybe someone can move to allow for the fundraising, purchase, sale, and use of inexpensive Corsi-Rosenthal boxes to help).

Sincerely,

Yoni Freedhoff, MD

Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine, University of Ottawa

Father of 3 OCDSB students