

## OUR MISSION

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.  
We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.

## OUR VISION

At Toronto Catholic we transform the world  
through witness, faith, innovation and action.



# AGENDA ADDENDUM THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL BEING, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## PUBLIC SESSION

Garry Tanuan, Chair

Teresa Lubinski, Vice-Chair

Thursday, February 4, 2021

7:00 P.M.

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10.b. Jennifer Di Francesco, Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC) Ward 1 Representative, regarding S.10 Regulation 1.iii (Withdrawn as per Delegate's Request)	
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*Redmond, regarding Opposing Changes to Regulation 10(1) of  
Student Trustee Policy T.02*

- 10.h. *Eric Guy regarding Pride Month and Pride Flag for June 2021 in all  
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**18. *Listing of Communications***

- 18.a. *Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) regarding Safe  
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## TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### DELEGATION REGISTRATION FORM FOR STANDING OR OTHER COMMITTEES

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Delegation No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Public Session

☐ Private Session

☐ Three (3) Minutes

Name	Paolo De Buono
Committee	Student Achievement and Well-Being Catholic Education Human Resources
Date of Presentation	2/4/2021
Topic of Presentation	June 2021 as Pride Month in All TCDSB Schools
Topic or Issue	Recognition of Pride Month (which is a topic or issue not subject to a collective agreement as per the Delegations policy)
Details	Recognizing June 2021 as Pride Month is in the best interests of all TCDSB students, particularly the TCDSB's LGBTQ+ students. At least 10 Catholic district school boards in Ontario, including 2 which border the TCDSB and 3 within the Archdiocese of Toronto, recognized June 2020 as Pride Month. The TCDSB refused to do so. This year, consistent with the TCDSB's Equity Action Plan, the TCDSB should recognize June 2021 as Pride Month and should use the rainbow flag as the symbol for this recognition. /TD>
Action Requested	That the TCDSB recognize June 2021 as Pride Month in all TCDSB schools.
I am here as a delegate to speak only on my own behalf	Yes
I am an official representative of the Catholic School Parent Committee(CSPC)	No
I am an official representative of student government	No
I am here as a spokesperson for another group or organization	No
I have read, understand and agree to comply with the rules for Delegations as per the TCDSB Delegations Policy T14	Yes
Submittal Date	12/9/2020

# English Catholic School Boards in Ontario

## Recognizing June 2020 as Pride Month

(updated June 15, 2020 at 7:00 am)

Yes (10) <sup>1</sup>	No (19) <sup>2</sup>
<a href="#">Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB</a> <a href="#">Durham CDSB</a> <a href="#">Kenora CDSB</a> <a href="#">Niagara CDSB</a> <a href="#">Ottawa CSB</a> <a href="#">Simcoe Muskoka CDSB</a> <a href="#">Thunder Bay CDSB</a> <a href="#">Waterloo CDSB</a> <a href="#">Wellington CDSB</a> <a href="#">York CDSB</a>	Brant Haldimand Norfolk CDSB Bruce-Grey CDSB CDSB of Eastern Ontario <a href="#">Dufferin-Peel CDSB</a> Halton CDSB Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB <a href="#">Huron-Perth CDSB</a> Huron-Superior CDSB London DCSB <a href="#">Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB</a> Northeastern CDSB Northwest CDSB Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland & Clarington CDSB Renfrew County CDSB St. Clair CDSB Sudbury CDSB <a href="#">Superior North CDSB</a> <a href="#">Toronto CDSB</a> Windsor-Essex CDSB

<sup>1</sup> “Yes” means that the Catholic school board has referred to Pride Month at minimum as a universal event. (Eg. “It’s Pride Month in Ontario.”)

<sup>2</sup> “No” means that the Catholic school board has either a) not made a statement (for which the board appears with no link) or b) has made an “inclusive” statement that intentionally excludes a clear reference to “Pride Month” (for which the board appears with a link to their statement).



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Name	Samantha Adebiyi
Committee	Student Achievement and Well-Being Catholic Education Human Resources
Date of Presentation	2/4/2021
Topic of Presentation	Black Achiever Initiative
Topic or Issue	Completion rate of Black students in schools
Details	<p>Black Achievers is a cluster mentoring initiative that will provide Black youth with the opportunity to develop professionally (academically and career-wise), socially and mentally with the support of Black adult professionals/role models. The program will run from September to June (school year) and youth will meet weekly.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To positively impact Black youth and give them hope for their futures through personal, social and leadership development, and cultural pride</li> <li>• To provide Black youth with opportunities that will facilitate their full participation in professional, academic and community life</li> <li>• To support educational achievement of Black youth and encourage post-secondary education</li> <li>• To promote change within the system of employment by facilitating access to resources, connections and education and by encouraging Black youth to pursue fulfilling professional careers</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities and Needs Being Addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black youth are less likely than all other youth to attain a postsecondary qualification. The gap between postsecondary graduation rates for Black youth persists even after controlling for differences in socioeconomic and family characteristics</li> <li>• Black youth have intersectional needs; for example, male Black youth are almost twice as likely as other male youth to not be employed or in education or training. This gap remained after accounting for differences in socioeconomic factors (e.g., parent's level of income and education),<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>

	<p>suggesting that male Black youth are at a disadvantage compared to other male youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black youth have been disproportionately affected by issues such as racism and discrimination, gun violence and COVID-19 compared to other youth</li> </ul>
Action Requested	To work with the schools in having referrals to the Black Achiever program
I am here as a delegate to speak only on my own behalf	Yes
I am an official representative of the Catholic School Parent Committee(CSPC)	No
I am an official representative of student government	No
I am here as a spokesperson for another group or organization	Yes YMCA
I have read, understand and agree to comply with the rules for Delegations as per the T DSB Delegations Policy T14	Yes
Submittal Date	1/26/2021

# 1

## THEORY OF CHANGE

### Black Achievers Program

Black Achievers is a cluster mentoring<sup>1</sup> initiative that will provide Black youth with the opportunity to develop professionally (academically and career-wise), socially and mentally with the support of Black adult professionals/role models. The program will also provide Black youth with opportunities for leadership and community involvement. The program will run from September to June (school year) and youth will meet weekly.



## OBJECTIVES

1. To positively impact Black youth and give them hope for their futures through personal, social and leadership development, and cultural pride
2. To provide Black youth with opportunities that will facilitate their full participation in professional, academic and community life
3. To support educational achievement of Black youth and encourage post-secondary education
4. To promote change within the system of employment by facilitating access to resources, connections and education and by encouraging Black youth to pursue fulfilling professional careers

## OPPORTUNITIES & NEEDS

- Black youth are less likely than other youth to attain a postsecondary qualification. The gap between postsecondary graduation rates for Black youth persists even after controlling for differences in socioeconomic and family characteristics<sup>2</sup>
- Black youth have intersectional needs; for example, male Black youth are almost twice as likely as other male youth to not be employed or in education or training. This gap remained after accounting for differences in socioeconomic factors (e.g., parent's level of income and education)<sup>2</sup>, suggesting that male Black youth are at a disadvantage compared to other male youth
- Black youth have been disproportionately affected by issues such as racism and discrimination, gun violence and COVID-19 compared to other youth

## TARGET POPULATION

- Youth who self-identify as Black and are high school age, regardless of gender identity and gender expression, race, ethnicity, religious heritage, class, sexual orientation or physical/mental ability, that reside in the Galloway, Malvern and Dorset Park neighborhoods in Scarborough

## SHORTER-TERM OUTCOMES

1. Increased knowledge and appreciation of Black history and cultures
2. Increased awareness of, and ability to cope with, issues of racism and discrimination affecting Black youth, including an understanding of anti-black racism and the ability to navigate society as a Black person
3. Increased positive view of personal future (i.e., greater hope for their personal future and achieving their full-potential)
4. Strengthened social support networks (e.g., to other youth in community, mentors, program staff, partner organizations, etc.)
5. Secure an adult-ally
6. Strengthened community belonging
7. Improved academic success in secondary school and post-secondary readiness (e.g., grades, motivation, scholarship/bursary support)
8. Improved employability skills (e.g., resume building, building professional networks, etc.)
9. Increased leadership skills

## LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES

Autonomy,  
Relatedness,  
& Competence

Resilience

Meaningful  
Employment

Life-Long Health and Well-Being

## ACTIVITIES

- Weekly meetings to deliver post-secondary/career readiness curriculum and character/leadership development curriculum
- Creating awareness of opportunities for post-secondary education financial support and providing assistance to apply for bursaries, scholarships and post-secondary education
- Cluster mentoring to develop strong mentor-mentee relationships between Black youth and Black adult professionals
- Celebrating Black youth success (e.g., graduation event)
- Tours (e.g., post-secondary, mentor employment workplace, cultural)
- Providing referrals to other partnerships/organizations (where necessary)

## APPROACH

- Safe, welcoming, Black African Centered, caring and inclusive environment
- Individual-tailored programming based on youth needs
- Partnerships with community organizations and institutions
- Positive youth development approach

## FOOTNOTES

1. Cluster mentoring in this program means that there will be multiple mentors and multiple mentees in each session (instead of a 1:1 relationship)
2. Source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2020001/article/00002-eng.htm>



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<b>Name</b>	Stephanie P. De Castro	
<b>Committee</b>	Student Achievement and Well-Being Catholic Education Human Resources	
<b>Date of Presentation</b>	2/4/2021	
<b>Topic of Presentation</b>	Re-Evaluation of Student Trustee Guidelines to Include Students of Non-Roman Catholic Faith	
<b>Topic or Issue</b>	Changes to Regulation 10 regarding students of non-roman catholic faith to be able to run for the position of Student Trustee in the school board without religion being an issue.	
<b>Details</b>	I would like to support the change to this motion to ensure that all students in this board are given equal opportunities.	
<b>Action Requested</b>	Motion to change guidelines be approved.	
<b>I am here as a delegate to speak only on my own behalf</b>		
<b>I am an official representative of the Catholic School Parent Committee(CSPC)</b>		
<b>I am an official representative of student government</b>		
<b>I am here as a spokesperson for another group or organization</b>		
<b>I have read, understand and agree to comply with the rules for Delegations as per the TCDSB Delegations Policy T14</b>	Yes	
<b>Submittal Date</b>	1/26/2021	

## **Student Achievement Delegation**

### **Stephanie De Castro**

Good evening trustees, staff, and attendees. I am grateful to be able to express my opinions and student voice tonight. As a present student in the Toronto Catholic School Board, I believe that the teachings of this community have shown the utmost importance that we, as Catholics, should be inclusive to all peoples, regardless of religion, beliefs, and faith. I find it unjust that students who have different beliefs and upbringings are restricted opportunities to further their achievement within this board. Defining a student solely by their faith and not their capabilities to represent themselves with integrity and passion as a leader is robbing them of future opportunities and endeavours they could possibly have taken a hold of.

The elected student trustee represents over 94,000 voices in this board. Every single one of these students all come from different and diverse backgrounds. It is evident we promote and accept inclusivity and diversity. But when the time comes to see this representation with a position on the board, we often struggle to seek past this barrier. The definition of diversity is understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. I ask for your support in putting the motion through to encompass our catholic values as a community as we strive to give each student equal chances and opportunities.

Being a hopeful candidate in the upcoming student elections myself, I do not believe faith is an important factor whether it be an advantage or disadvantage as long as our board values are being represented. I am appalled that other candidates must overcome issues such as this in order to run. Standing alongside other student leaders in the coming months with these rules imposed does give an uneasy feeling that there is a barrier between us. It feels unfair to both parties participating. With that being said, I ask that we open our hearts and minds to empower students who wish to create change in our school communities. Thank you so much for your time.



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<b>Name</b>	Joseph Markson
<b>Committee</b>	Student Achievement and Well-Being Catholic Education Human Resources
<b>Date of Presentation</b>	2/4/2021
<b>Topic of Presentation</b>	Opposing Changes to Regulation 10(1) of Student Trustee Policy T.02
<b>Topic or Issue</b>	The importance of faith in the governance of Catholic education.
<b>Details</b>	<p>In the mission and vision statements of the TCDSB, the words “parish”, “rooted in the love of Christ”, “grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity” and “transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action” have deep meaning and tangibly inform the Board’s decision-making. The Catholic values in the mission and vision statements are derived from faith in the love and life of Christ, the gospels, the sacraments and the teachings and guidance of the Church. If the TCDSB believes that the leaders in Catholic education do not need to authentically hold, understand and promote such Catholic values, then the TCDSB should delete its mission and vision statements and also stop saying prayers, holding masses and displaying the Cross because these articles of the Roman Catholic faith may possibly offend or exclude non-Catholics.</p> <p>There is no right to Catholic governance and a Catholic education in a public school board. Equally, there is no right to secular governance and a secular education in a Catholic school board. Leaders in Catholic education are entrusted to affirm, promote and manifest Catholic values in the education of our children. It is unreasonable to expect a leader in Catholic education to affirm, promote and manifest values that he or she does not personally know, understand, believe or may even deny or reject.</p> <p>Being a Student Trustee in a Catholic school board is much more than a positional opportunity to gain civic leadership experience. It carries the responsibility to affirm and promote faith-driven Catholic values in education. Not everyone is inclined or qualified to do so. At a minimum, there should be a faith connection to Catholic values for leaders entrusted to foster Catholic</p>

	<p>values in Catholic education.</p> <p>Fluctuating, transient and often indiscernible social pressures such as political correctness should not be permitted to displace Catholic values “rooted in the love of Christ” and incrementally influence a Catholic school board to stop being so overtly Catholic.</p> <p>There is a straight line between secularizing Catholic leadership in education and secularizing Catholic education. It strains credulity to read “inclusive learning community” in the mission statement as somehow requiring the exclusion of a faith connection to Catholic values in the Catholic leadership of a Catholic school board.</p> <p>It should not be surprising or offensive to the non-Catholic parent or student to see a Catholic school board and its Trustees since they prioritize Catholic values and to take reasonable steps to ensure the continuity of its Catholic character and identity. It is simply being true to what it is.</p> <p>If you remove this requirement, and by logical extension and for the sake of consistency, then go on over time to remove “Roman Catholic” from every requirement in the governance of Catholic education, the TCDSB will slowly but surely transform itself into a public school board. On behalf of the Fr. John Redmond Catholic School Parent Council, to be true to the mission and vision statements of the TCDSB and the future of Catholic education, I respectfully urge you to maintain a faith connection in Catholic governance in education by the TCDSB and to vote against the motion.</p>	
Action Requested	Dismiss the motion.	
I am here as a delegate to speak only on my own behalf	No	
I am an official representative of the Catholic School Parent Committee(CSPC)	Yes Fr John Redmond Member	
I am an official representative of student government		
I am here as a spokesperson for another group or organization		
I have read, understand and agree to comply with the rules for Delegations as per the TCDSB Delegations Policy T14		
Submittal Date	1/31/2021	



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Name	Eric Guy
Committee	Student Achievement and Well-Being Catholic Education Human Resources
Date of Presentation	2/4/2021
Topic of Presentation	The Doctrinal Basis for Catholic Education Policy about Human Identity, Dignity & Human Sexuality
Topic or Issue	Pride Month & Pride Flag for June 2021 in all TCDSB Schools.
Details	Defense of TCDSB policy & Catholic moral doctrine about human identity, dignity & human sexuality.
Action Requested	The maintenance of TCDSB policy prohibiting the promotion of gender identity & gender ideology initiatives such as Pride Month or the use of the Pride Flag.
I am here as a delegate to speak only on my own behalf	Yes
I am an official representative of the Catholic School Parent Committee(CSPC)	No
I am an official representative of student government	No
I am here as a spokesperson for another group or organization	No Brebeuf College School
I have read, understand and agree to comply with the rules for Delegations as per the TCDSB Delegations Policy T14	Yes
Submittal Date	2/1/2021

## TCDSB Delegate Presentation

Topic: Doctrinal Basis and Scientific & Medical Evidence for Catholic Teachings on Human Identity, Gender & Sexuality

Topic Issue: Pride Month & Pride Flag for June 2021 in all TCDSB Schools

Action Requested: Maintenance of TCDSB Policy Prohibiting Gender Ideology Initiatives (i.e., adoption of a Pride Month & LGBTQ & 2 Spirited Flag) which Contradict Catholic Teachings, Scientific & Medical Expertise

Date: 7:00 pm, Thurs., Feb. 4, 2021

### OVERVIEW:

#### 1. **Catholic Teaching on Human Identity, Gender & Sexuality**

- a) Briefly Stated Catechetical Teachings of the Church
- b) Magisterial Statements & Documents

#### 2. **Scientific & Medical Basis for Gender**

- a) Chromosome, reproductive organs & hormones
- b) Gender Dysphoria - DSM

**Good evening,**

The topic that I will address is: the doctrinal basis and scientific & medical evidence for Catholic teachings on human identity, gender & sexuality. **My goal is to present objective information to facilitate rational policy decisions that will neither violate:**

**Catholic teaching & Magisterial authority;  
or, the incontrovertible facts of science & medicine.**

**Regrettably, the issues brought to this Board meeting presuppose a theory about gender & gender identity that Pope Francis has characterised as “profound falsehood” and “ideological colonization.”** While I recognize the enormous pressure that’s being brought to bare on each of you by special interest groups, activists & allies of this movement within the Board & within the media, **my presentation is intended to provide an objective basis that** may be belittled, slandered & even rejected by special interest groups, activists from within & beyond our Board, **but it is defended by our denominational rights & our right to scientific & medical evidence as an objective foundation for Board policy.**

Contrary to accusations that the TCDSB employs discriminatory practises or maintains systemic barriers that inhibit the rights of students that distinguish themselves according to their sexual orientation **our Catholic schools have always taught compassion & respect for the dignity of every person, regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation.** (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church nos. 1929, 1930 & 1931) This ethos is integral to our *raison-d’etre* and like Catholic teaching about human identity, gender & sexual ethics has been entrusted to us by the divine teacher himself, Jesus.

## 1. Catholic Teaching on Human Identity, Gender & Sexuality

### a) Briefly Stated Catechetical Teachings of the Church

**Our faith, informed by biblical theology & the Magisterial authority of the Church, teaches: that the body and soul of the human being are so united that sexual identity is rooted in biological identity as male or female.**(Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 364, 365, 2332, 2333, 2393) **Thus, the doctrinal basis for Catholic education about human identity, gender & human sexuality is considered “a reality deeply inscribed in man and woman.”** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World” (2004), no. 8. cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2393) **The Church teaches that gender is given by God and that the body reveals the divine plan. As such, humans are not free to choose or change their sexual identity.** (Pope Francis, Address to the Polish Bishops - 27 July 2016) **Moreover, a person’s biological sex and his/her gender are treated as one and the same. This is a clear mandate for the rejection of gender theory & gender identity ideologies which are implicit & promoted by the LGBTQ+Two Spirited movement.**

**The text of my delegation also provides (2) papal statements & papal documents from 2019, 2012, 2008 & 2004 which explicitly corroborate these doctrinal teachings & reject initiatives which promote gender theory like the adoption of a Pride Month & Pride Flag.**

### b) Magisterial Statements & Documents

#### - **Congregation for Catholic Education: “MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM” Vatican City 2019:**

The text, speaks of “an educational crisis”, in particular on the themes of affectivity and sexuality, in the face of “challenges emerging from varying forms of an ideology that is given the general name ‘gender theory’, which 'denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman',” and considers them as “merely the product of historical and cultural conditioning.” Identity would then “become the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time “. **The text speaks of an anthropological disorientation that characterizes the cultural climate of our time, contributing to “the destabilization of the family.”**

**Turning to education, the document stresses the primary rights and duties of parents with regard to the education of their children — rights and duties which cannot be delegated or usurped by others.** It also notes that children have the right to a mother and a father, and that it is within the family that children can learn to recognise the beauty of sexual difference.

**Finally, the document notes the importance for Catholic schools of taking “into consideration the age-group of the students to be taught”, and of treating “each person with respect”. This can be done, it says, “through a way of accompanying that is discreet and confidential, capable of reaching out to those who are experiencing complex and painful situations”.**

**Address by Pope Benedict XVI to the Curia, Thursday December 12, 2012:**

- **The profound falsehood of this (gender identity) theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious.** People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, which serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves. **According to the biblical creation account, being created by God as male and female pertains to the essence of the human creature.** This duality is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God.

**Benedict XVI, Christmas Address to the Roman Curia**

(excerpt from sec. 1, paras 5, 6, 7), 22 December 2008. –

- **If the Church speaks of the nature of the human being as man and woman, and demands that this order of creation be respected, this is not some antiquated metaphysics. What is involved here is faith in the Creator and a readiness to listen to the “language” of creation. To disregard this would be the self-destruction of man himself, and hence the destruction of God’s own work.**

**The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (2004), Section 224, states:**

- **Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his or her sexual identity.** Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarities are oriented towards the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarities,

needs and mutual support between the sexes are lived out. **According to this perspective, it is obligatory that positive law (human law/human policy) be conformed to the natural law, according to which sexual identity is indispensable, because it is the objective condition for forming a couple in marriage.**

Therefore, let there be no doubt that the Magisterial Authority of the Church does not condone gender theory or gender ideology. Catholic teaching is clear on the need to accept the objective truth of the reality of our bodies as being either male or female.

## **2. Scientific & Medical Basis for Gender**

- a) Chromosome, reproductive organs & hormones
- b) Gender Dysphoria - DSM

**In a recent journal by the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, Dr. Moira McQueen wrote that the scientific and medical basis for “gender identity is determined at conception, genetically, anatomically and chromosomally.”** (excerpt from CCBI, Bioethics Matters, March 2016, Vol 14, No.1) These well documented scientific facts have always guided the medical community & affirmed our Catholic teachings about gender & gender identity.

In the medical community, the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V. 2013) “re-classified Gender Identity Disorder as gender dysphoria. Although the condition has been moved to a lower level, its very classification indicates its psychiatric nature. It is a condition where people with the condition are genetically and chromosomally male or female. It is crucial to remember that the cause of this condition is as yet unknown: that it is psychological or psychiatric in origin and not physiological. Therefore, we must be prudent in our assessments as to how best to handle these situations, recognizing that what adults may think is the best way, may over the long term be wrong.” (excerpt from CCBI, Bioethics Matters, March 2016, Vol 14, No.1)

**Confusion about gender or gender identity is referred to in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as gender dysphoria. This dysphoria raises many questions for the child, the family, the school and wider society. As is usual in moral issues, there is more than the individual to be**

**considered: there is also the issue of the common good. Moreover, the medical & scientific communities do not** contravene Catholic teaching about gender or gender identity and they certainly do not **provide medical or scientific evidence that shows this psychiatric dysphoria merits a civil or human right.**

**In summation, Catholic teaching about human gender, identity & sexuality is well developed & clearly articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church & many recent Magisterial statements and documents that have always been affirmed by objective scientific & medical evidence.**

**For this reason, I urge you to reject all gender ideology initiatives like the proposed adoption of a “Pride Month” & the Pride Flag in all TCDSB schools in the best interests of all of God’s children**

The Council of Ontario  
Medical Officers of  
Health (COMOH) is a  
Section of



alPHA's members are  
the public health units  
in Ontario.

**alPHA Sections:**

Boards of Health  
Section

Council of Ontario  
Medical Officers of  
Health (COMOH)

**Affiliate**

**Organizations:**

Association of Ontario  
Public Health Business  
Administrators

Association of  
Public Health  
Epidemiologists  
in Ontario

Association of  
Supervisors of Public  
Health Inspectors of  
Ontario

Health Promotion  
Ontario

Ontario Association of  
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of  
Public Health Nursing  
Leaders

Ontario Dietitians in  
Public Health

January 29, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5th Flr, 438 University Ave,  
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Hon Christine Elliott,  
Minister of Health  
College Park 5th Flr, 777 Bay St, Toronto,  
ON M7A 2J3

Dear Ministers Lecce and Elliott,

**Re: Safe Return to School is an Essential Priority**

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Ontario's Medical Officers of Health support the reopening of schools as essential for children as community rates of COVID-19 decrease across the province. Upon careful review and consideration of local indicators, we believe it is possible, and in fact, imperative, that schools begin to open before the reopening of other sectors, as the Stay-at-Home orders are lifted provincially. Safe reopening of all schools in Ontario is essential.

**Evidence-based data on the importance and safety of school openings**

We echo the updated advice of the Hospital for Sick Children, "Guidance for School Operation during the Pandemic," which notes the harms of prolonged school closures and recommends that daily in-person classrooms should be the *"last to close and the first to open"*<sup>1</sup>.

Data from published reports echo the experience of local public health agencies which has shown that the risk of transmission from children to children and children to adults in primary school and daycare settings is low when public health measures are in place and are followed<sup>2,3</sup>. An updated evidence review published by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools<sup>4</sup> includes studies before and after school reopening which consistently have shown no impact of school opening on COVID-19 cases or hospitalizations.

Similarly, a very recent Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publication<sup>5</sup> showed that with masking requirements and student cohorting in place, transmission risk within schools appeared low, suggesting that schools might be able to safely open with appropriate mitigation efforts in place, and despite some times when high community transmission was present.

**Maximize infection prevention and control measures in schools**

The implementation of infection control measures which are present in all Ontario schools is critically important to limiting transmission of COVID-19 in school settings. Increasing some of the infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures such as the daily confirmation of screening of staff and students, wearing masks, and ensuring physical distancing will help to continue to keep schools safe. Public health capacity to do complete case and contact follow up in school settings is also crucial for the safe return to school. Adherence to public health measures must be rigorous and comprehensive.

### **Focus on interventions to reduce risks for staff**

We also advise that more efforts are needed to reduce close unprotected staff/staff interactions such as during breaks and in lunchrooms. This includes ensuring that there are no in-person staff training, meetings or social gatherings. Personal protective equipment (PPE) measures for staff should also be reiterated including refreshers before returning to the classroom.

Itinerant staff have continued to pose a higher risk for schools. We recommend that itinerant teachers not provide in-person instruction to multiple cohorts. We also recommend reducing the number of schools that staff attend.

### **Utilize and enhance testing resources for the biggest gains**

In order to support active screening in schools, all communities must have same day access to testing for COVID-19. With evidence of the presence of a much more transmissible variant of the SARS CoV-2 virus in many of our communities, early case and contact management continue to be critical tools in the prevention of spread. We welcome the improved turnaround times in many parts of the province. The deployment of rapid testing for symptomatic individuals will also support earlier detection and containment of the virus.

The role of testing asymptomatic students or staff for COVID-19 as a surveillance tool, outside of an outbreak, identifies few additional cases, suggesting that widespread asymptomatic transmission does not commonly occur in the school setting<sup>6</sup>. Enhanced testing around cases and in outbreak situations will enable testing resources are utilized to provide the best gains.

### **Continue to reduce community transmission, especially in areas with high rates**

The literature is clear that levels of community transmission are important predictors for the risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in school settings. However recent modeling done with academic partners shows that extending the closure of schools by a few weeks has less of an impact than the implementation of additional public health measures impacting the community. We recommend that schools be opened first, while other non-essential businesses or sectors remain closed, especially if community transmission rates in certain areas remain high. As well, local consideration can be given to staggering reopening of schools by grade.

### **Summary**

Many schools in Ontario have safely reopened across the province so far, and we are confident that all schools can be safely reopened. We recognize that the recent identification and transmission of variants of concern (VOC) pose a heightened risk for Ontarians and local public health agencies will continue to both monitor and evaluate their potential impact on our communities. At this point, we do not believe they present a reason to delay a return to the classroom.

In conclusion, we recommend:

- Reopening schools should be a priority, even before community restrictions are lifted.

- Ensure community public health measures are maximized to support school reopenings.
- Ensure IPAC measures are maximized in schools to prevent spread in the school setting. This includes measures to ensure physical distancing, reduce staff-to-staff interactions, and minimize interactions of staff with multiple cohorts.
- Have access to appropriate testing resources and utilize testing in ways that will provide the most benefit.
- Ensure public health capacity is available to complete full case and contact management in school settings.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Paul Roumeliotis  
Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health

**COPY:** Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery (Health)

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<sup>1</sup> COVID-19: Guidance for School Operation during the Pandemic January 21, 2021 accessed January 25, 2021 at <https://www.sickkids.ca/en/news/archive/2021/covid19-updated-guidance-school-operation-during-pandemic/>

<sup>2</sup> European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. COVID-19 in children and the role of school settings in transmission - first update. Stockholm; 2020. Accessed January 28, 2021 at [https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/COVID-19-in-children-and-the-role-of-school-settings-in-transmission-first-update\\_1.pdf](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/COVID-19-in-children-and-the-role-of-school-settings-in-transmission-first-update_1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Focus on: COVID-19 prevention measures in K-12 schools: optimizing screening and masking. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2020. Accessed January 28, 2021 at <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/sch/2020/12/covid-19-focus-on-optimizing-screening-and-masking.pdf?la=en>

<sup>4</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools. (2021, January 21). Living Rapid Review Update 12: What is the specific role of daycares and schools in COVID-19 transmission? Accessed January 22, 2021 at <https://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/covid-19-rapid-evidence-service>

<sup>5</sup> Falk A, Benda A, Falk P, Steffen S, Wallace Z, Høeg TB. COVID-19 Cases and Transmission in 17 K–12 Schools — Wood County, Wisconsin, August 31–November 29, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 26 January 2021. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7004e3>

<sup>6</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools. (2021, January 21). Living Rapid Review Update 12: What is the specific role of daycares and schools in COVID-19 transmission? Accessed January 22, 2021 at <https://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/covid-19-rapid-evidence-service>