

Dear Trustees,

Thank you for allowing time on your agenda for my delegation this evening. I am a parent with two children at the TCDSB. I recently learned that the TCDSB Board of Trustees passed a motion to relax secondary school uniform requirements for back to school 2020.

I am very concerned and frankly alarmed at the speed and thoughtlessness of this policy change. I am not aware that parents or other community members were consulted. In fact, I understand that this change was pushed through at a student meeting, without public notification of the agenda item.

Beyond the process inadequacy, here are a few of the reasons I am also concerned as a parent:

1. Safety: I am very worried about the school opening. As of today, I don't yet have all the final details, however, I understand there will be staggered entries. Students will be in masks that cover nearly their entire faces. The matter of the uniform as a practical tool to be able to visually identify members of the school community from non-students is critical. The second area of safety that concerns me is being able to differentiate clothes that my child has worn to school when they return home. I had a system planned whereby school uniforms would be separately laundered and easily distinguishable from other clothes. Since the virus lives on surfaces, my children were going to have a routine to change after school and we would handle managing clothing contamination using the school uniform as a clear identifier.
2. Bullying: I am not sure how many members of this board have a teenage daughter. Being a girl in grade 10 is very challenging these days. There are pressures on young girls on what to wear especially through social media. I feel that every day I have a struggle with my daughter about what is considered respectful attire. In fact, I specifically chose schools with school uniforms for this reason. I don't want my daughter to be judged by her body and I also want to teach her the lesson that she doesn't need to put her body on display to get attention. While you may think this irrelevant in a condensed school day, as a parent I wholeheartedly disagree. Our kids have been in isolation for months. They are going to be coming back into the world wanting to push boundaries. I think, especially for young girls, that we have to be mindful of these pressures and continue to focus a gender safe environment.
3. Cost: As a parent who has had two children in school uniforms since elementary school, the cost of uniforms is less than everyday clothing. I don't need to constantly stock up on new trendy clothes, I don't need to worry about brand and,

the uniform clothes are durable so they can be handed down to younger siblings or donated for students in need. As a former parent council member in the TCDSB, I am also aware of many programs that exist to support families in need regarding buying uniforms. Parent councils collect, launder and have uniform programs in schools. From past experience, the beginning of every school year gently used uniforms are donated to school and sold at very affordable rates.

I implore this board to reconsider this motion and thoughtfully contemplate on the long term impact of uniform policy changes. We may be facing the challenges for longer than the 2020-2021 school year. As parents, we want to preserve this little bit of normal tradition that we can.

Sincerely,
Teresa Visic