



## TECT Delegation to the Board of Trustees April 8, 2021

I hope all of you had a safe and blessed Easter.

COVID-19 shows no signs of weakening as we now face a deadly third wave. Hospitalizations are surging. The Variants of Concern are more contagious and cause greater illness or severe disease.

As of today, 128 TCDSB schools have active cases – approximately 66% of our schools. There are 320 active student cases and 84 active staff cases. Each one of these cases is a child or an educator with a family; a family whose future may well be compromised by exposure to this dangerous virus.

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on our TCDSB communities, the government continues to say schools are safe. The government argues that most schools across the province do not have active cases and most staff and students are COVID free.

To cite province-wide percentages downplays the seriousness of the situation in our schools. Cases are surging in Toronto and more and more experts believe that schools may be the drivers of community transmission.

To minimize the risks that our students and educators will face if there is a return to in-person learning is unacceptable and alarming.

Now more than ever, we must act to better protect the health and safety of our students, teachers and families. We must continue to

advocate strongly for the extension of remote learning beyond April 19<sup>th</sup> .

Much can be accomplished, when the largest Catholic Board and the largest OECTA Unit present a unified message. Recently, our combined efforts impacted positively on the decision to transition to remote learning and the decision to start vaccinating front line education workers in Toronto – now we must ensure access to vaccinations for all our Toronto education workers.

These are indeed precarious times for us all. This is especially true for our Occasional Teacher members. During the period of remote learning, the Board has chosen to end call outs for Occasional Teachers. This not only limits their right to work and earn a living during these uncertain times but will also negatively impact programming for our students. We ask that the Board reconsider this decision and immediately act to reinstate the callout system to fill daily absences.

I am confident that by working together on these issues, we can better protect the health and safety of our school communities.