



1292 Heenan Place • Kenora, ON P9N 2Y8 • T: (807) 468-9851  
F: (807) 468-8094 • www.kcdsb.on.ca

*Dedicated to Excellence in Catholic Education*



**Sent via email**

September 13, 2021

Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 438 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5  
Minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Lecce,

I am writing to you with an urgent request on behalf of the Board of Trustees. With only two days into the 2021 – 2022 School Year, we were forced to close one of our elementary classrooms due to a positive case of COVID-19.

The Kenora Catholic District School Board strongly urges the Province of Ontario to act as quickly as possible to implement a policy and strategy to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for all education staff, school visitors and anyone working with students in schools.

We support the growing number of medical and public health professionals, parents and union partners calling for a mandatory vaccination policy for the education sector. The evidence is clear that vaccination is the most effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 and provides a high level of effectiveness for preventing COVID-19 related hospitalizations, including risks associated with the highly transmissible Delta Variant and emerging Variants of Concern. A mandatory vaccination policy, with proper provincial direction and implementation, will provide greater protection from the spread of COVID-19 for students, especially children under the age of 12, who are not eligible to be vaccinated, vulnerable members of our communities and those who are unable to be vaccinated for medical or religious reasons.

The [federal government announced on August 13](#) that it would require vaccination of its federal workforce as early as the end of September across the federal public service. We are urging the provincial government to follow the federal government's lead and take these steps to further protect the health and safety of the education sector, community citizens and, most importantly, our students and school communities.

Protecting the health and safety of all students, staff and families and keeping our schools and classes open for in-person learning is the highest priority for the Kenora Catholic District School Board. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is the value of in-person learning, the relationships between students and teachers, and the positive impact in-person learning has on student mental health and well-being.

We will continue to advocate on behalf of our students, families and staff for a mandatory vaccination policy for education staff so that students can enjoy the benefits of learning at school with their peers, without the repeated and prolonged disruptions that marked last school year.

As a Board, we are prepared to work with the Ministry of Education, education staff, stakeholders, unions, and families to support the implementation of a mandatory provincial vaccination policy for education.

In closing, and as we have students and families who have already been impacted by a classroom closure due to COVID-19 exposure, we urge you to take action immediately to protect Ontario's education sector and keep schools open for students.

Yours in Catholic education,

*Teresa Gallik*

Teresa Gallik  
Chair of the Board

cc: Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario ([doug.fordco@pc.ola.org](mailto:doug.fordco@pc.ola.org))  
Greg Rickford, MPP Kenora – Rainy River ([greg.rickford@pc.ola.org](mailto:greg.rickford@pc.ola.org))  
Christine Elliot, Minister of Health ([Christine.elliott@ontario.ca](mailto:Christine.elliott@ontario.ca))  
Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health ([kyounghoon@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:kyounghoon@nwhu.on.ca))  
Patrick Daly, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association ([pdaly@ocsta.on.ca](mailto:pdaly@ocsta.on.ca))  
Leanne Davidson, OECTA Local President ([davidson.oecta@gmail.com](mailto:davidson.oecta@gmail.com))  
Mark Campaner, OPSEU Staff Representative ([mcampaner@opseu.org](mailto:mcampaner@opseu.org))  
Regional School Board Directors:  
Brend Hyatt, Northwest Catholic DSB ([bhyatt@tncdsb.on.ca](mailto:bhyatt@tncdsb.on.ca))  
Heather Campbell, Rainy River DSB ([heather.campbell@mail.rrdsb.com](mailto:heather.campbell@mail.rrdsb.com))  
Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Rainy River DSB ([sherri-lynn.pharand@kpdsb.ca](mailto:sherri-lynn.pharand@kpdsb.ca))  
Lucie Allaire, CSDC des Aurores boréales ([lallaire@csdcab.on.ca](mailto:lallaire@csdcab.on.ca))  
Board of Trustees  
Paul White, Director of Education ([pwhite@kcdsb.on.ca](mailto:pwhite@kcdsb.on.ca))