



PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

EPCA welcomes new, long overdue, school measures

Quebec, October 5, 2020 — The English Parents' Committee Association is pleased with measures announced today by Education Minister Jean-François Roberge to keep students and staff safe in schools.

Measures like mandatory mask-wearing outdoors and in-class for secondary students, measures for staff, along with increased adherence to class groups, augmented sanitation and increased monitoring of students are welcome.

It should be noted however, that these have been EPCA positions with the education ministry and its educational partners since the earliest discussions of return-to-school plans.

“Parents have clearly spoken on the need for masks and monitoring since the earliest measures were introduced,” says EPCA President Katherine Korakakis. “Parents asked for this at the beginning of the school year, which at the time seemed to fall on deaf ears.”

The hybrid scheme for Secondary 4 and 5 is also long overdue, and akin to what parents have proposed since Day One.

The measures announced today beg the question: Enforcing mask wearing and distancing on school grounds is important, so why did it take so long to act, given the widespread evidence that the issue was problematic early on in the school year?

“If the government is closing gyms and bars to be proactive in fighting transmission, then why do school measures lag so far behind?”

Furthermore, while it is worth noting that the government has pledged an additional \$85 million to boost hiring of cleaning and monitoring staff in schools, did it really take until October to determine this need?

In school transport, public health recommends a limit of one student per assigned bus bench if possible, a measure EPCA believes is clearly not feasible.

“We are mindful that the government has an arduous task of balancing the needs of the economy, individual and collective health, families, labour relations, and the education of an entire cohort of Quebec youth. EPCA agrees that the best place for students is in schools, but in this pandemic situation, these measures should have long been in place to help mitigate risk, including increased maintenance staff and mandatory face coverings.”

“Given the number of guidelines and measures being imposed and modified, and as the situation evolves, at what cost shall schools remain open? Can quality education continue to be guaranteed under these conditions?”

As the situation evolves and more measures may be implemented, EPCA will continue to be at the forefront of all discussions with the government and its educational partners to ensure parent concerns are put forward when it comes to the health, safety, and quality of education for their children.

- 30 -

About the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA)

The English Parents' Committee Association represents eight Quebec English-language school boards. With a team of Directors chosen by member Parent Committees, it is the official voice of Quebec's English public school parent community, representing almost 100,000 students. Speaking with one voice for parents and their children, EPCA represents parent interests in all dealings with the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES)* and across all levels of government. By providing the tools and information parents need to serve and represent their communities, EPCA is a singular reference point for English parent governance.

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