



Monday April 5, 2021

The following letter was previously sent to:

Stephen Lecce, Education Minister of Ontario
Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Christine Elliott, Health Minister of Ontario
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Ontario
All Ontario school board directors, superintendents and trustees
ETFO, OECTA, OSSTF, AEFO
All Ontario MPPs

To Whom it may concern:

Parents for Mask Free Education is a group of Ontario parents concerned about our children's human rights, health and safety in schools.

Our concerns are with COVID-19 policies and recommendations in schools that many experts around the world believe are inflicting harm on our children. One of the greatest harms we see being inflicted on children is mandatory masks and social distancing during a critical time of their social, emotional and cognitive development. There are several examples ^{1,2,3,4,8, 10, 11,13} that illustrate the emotional, psychological and developmental damage being done to children. Recently, Ontario lowered the threshold for mandatory masks to grade 1 from grade 4, and masks were also made mandatory outside during recess and lunch breaks. Prior to February 2021, masks were not mandatory outside. While some educators are giving children scheduled "mask breaks", some are not providing enough breaks, or any breaks at all.

We believe measures like social distancing and mandatory masking for children, with few breaks, is unnecessary, excessive and potentially harmful. There are currently no studies on the long-term impacts of masking young children ⁵, and the World Health Organization's directives on mask wearing for

children clearly states that low-risk children under 12 do not need to wear masks ⁶. The WHO also says “masks should not be worn during vigorous physical activity ⁷,” guidance that Ontario schools are clearly contravening.

According to [Health Care Consent Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 2, Sched. A \(ontario.ca\)](#). Mandating masks to stop the spread of a disease is a medical treatment requiring an individual’s consent under sections 10 & 11 of the Health Care Consent Act, Ontario.

Mandating the wearing of masks contravenes sections 2 and 7 of the [Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982 \(justice.gc.ca\)](#). We ask that the Ontario government and school boards justify contravening these acts.

We are requesting the Ontario government and school boards provide the scientific data and risk assessment that was used to justify mandatory masking policies in schools for children in grades 1-12.

Can you guarantee there will be no developmental, emotional and cognitive short and long-term effects from mask wearing on children as young as six for 30+ hours a week?

If you cannot provide the data that supports this harmful policy and if you cannot guarantee there will be no short or long-term effects on children from prolonged mask-wearing, we want you to abolish the new masking guidelines, as well as existing mask policies across schools in Ontario.

In September, many school boards decided to go above and beyond ministry guidelines and implemented mandatory masks from kindergarten, in some cases without consulting local public health units. Now, they are going even further with regards to mask exemption policies. Many school boards and principals are asking parents to defend their mask exemptions, and requesting additional documentation such as doctor’s notes, which the ministry clearly discourages. Even in cases where parents provide medical notes, principals are questioning and even rejecting those notes. In many cases where they accept doctor’s notes and allow medical exemptions, educators are segregating and discriminating against children with mask exemptions.

Some boards are going as far as revoking existing medical exemptions, and others are not allowing medical exemptions at all, which we believe is a contravention of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This is a clear violation of children’s human rights, especially those who have valid medical issues and are unable to wear masks.

We have included testimonials from parents whose children have suffered as a result of mask-wearing. Some first and last names have been removed for privacy reasons, but all of them are real and verifiable accounts we’ve received via email and our social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. There are countless other testimonials on similar websites and parent groups.

Does the Ministry of Education and Ontario school boards take full responsibility for any and all harms to children as a result of these enhanced masking policies? If so, we’d like it clearly spelled out in all ministry websites, documents and directives about mask wearing in schools.

We want families and children to have the choice to wear masks, and we demand the government’s emergency COVID-19 orders do not supersede the human rights of children.

Further, we are asking that you do not implement mandatory masks or social distancing for the 2021-22 school year. We also ask that school boards in the province not be granted additional powers to implement policies that go beyond provincial health directives. School boards should not be making

these choices about our children's health - medical professionals should be making those decisions, based on sound scientific evidence. As a recent report from Public Health Ontario⁹ showed, COVID-19 mitigation measures have contributed to a severe decline in children's mental, emotional, developmental and physical health. Suicide rates among children are climbing¹². Children across Ontario have been forced to sacrifice their human rights this year in order to protect adults who are fully capable of protecting themselves with PPE. This is unconscionable. Many children say they don't want to go to school anymore because of these COVID-19 protocols and the toxic environment they've created. Ontario children deserve a return to normalcy.

Parents are acutely aware of the constant battle between your government and teachers' unions. Our position is clear: children are not to be used as political pawns in this ongoing battle. This is unacceptable and must cease immediately, for the sake of our children. We ask that the provincial government protect children and redeem itself in the eyes of Ontario's youngest generation, because children have lost faith in their school leadership and their government.

Sincerely

Parents for Mask Free Education

Footnotes:

¹ [Child Suicide is Becoming an 'International Epidemic' Amid Restricted Pandemic Life, Doctors Warn - Foundation for Economic Education \(fee.org\)](#)

² [Covid: The devastating toll of the pandemic on children - BBC News](#)

³ [Covid is having a devastating impact on children — and the vaccine won't fix everything \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

⁴ [Masking Children: Tragic, Unscientific, and Damaging – AIER](#)

⁵ [The impact of face masks on children-A mini review - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁶ [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Children and masks \(who.int\)](#)

⁷ [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Children and masks \(who.int\)](#)

⁸ [The potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child growth and development: a systematic review \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁹ [Negative impacts of community-based public health measures on children, adolescents and families during the COVID-19 pandemic: Update \(publichealthontario.ca\)](#)

¹⁰ [4 million cries for help: Calls to Kids Help Phone soar amid pandemic | The Star](#)

¹¹ [Global rise in childhood mental health issues amid pandemic | The Star](#)

¹² [They had to write an obituary for their 16-year-old son. This is what Saul's parents want you to know about the pandemic's effect on youth mental health | The Star](#)

¹³ [https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.insauga.com%2Fyouth-admitted-to-hospital-after-suicide-attempt-has-tripled-hamilton-health-sciences%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR1x_BBwbJyxIWVGLjhYxZ95ZTqInClrNUCJL_YcW0KFbUD3GVo4eEr0o&h=AT2Q5ntBa7oF8hW-IFIHEX6QY1ZkEKFYLhjpIFOcSIHg-Wltw4MdFJftXICF8U6x-s3rGcO587P5JMN7YrfYn9dFtei8I2V0wOTTO5aJAtiwBRVgeiodObyZjg8m00-gCY8dLL3ubyO8](#)