

OCDSB Special Board Meeting -- 22 November 2022 -- Delegation from Greg Macdougall

Greetings,

I would like to offer a few pieces of information and suggestions regarding the motion for masking.

Overall, I urge you to support implementing an immediate mask mandate for OCDSB students and staff.

I also urge you to remove any standing OCDSB policies against ventilation improvement in classrooms, if still in effect -- namely the two policies I learned of earlier in the pandemic:

* staff were instructed not to open windows; and,

* 'Corsi-Rosenthal boxes' (Do-It-Yourself air filtering tool) were not permitted to be used.

My background: I have previously worked as a teacher in the OCDSB, as well as other three other school boards in Ontario. Math is one of my specialties, and has provided me an increased ability to parse through some of the science about COVID and health care statistics.

I have delegated at a number of Ottawa Board of Health meetings during this pandemic.

It has been frustrating at times: I produced a fairly in-depth analysis of OPH's February 2021 report on COVID in schools, demonstrating they didn't have enough data to back up their conclusions of very limited spread within schools, that I don't think they ever acknowledged. But at the start of 2022, I was able to get them to issue a correction on a similar statement made by Dr. Etches, where she had stated that as the Omicron variant wave hit, school rates were lower than the rest of the community. Earlier on, Dr. Etches had made a statement at a meeting about how droplet transmission was the primary means of spread, while later in the week CBC was reporting that Canada's representative to the World Health Organization was being criticized for the same thing, but authorities and media locally seemed to give Dr. Etche a pass on such comments.

And most recently - the past three OPH board meetings, in June, September, and November - I have delegated pushing for implementing mask mandates, to no effect. At the meeting this month, I was the only one pushing for mask mandates, but by the end of the week Dr. Etches was saying to the media that mandates were a good idea, but only - for some unexplained reason - if they were implemented for the whole province or at individual organizations / businesses, and not at the city level or in city-run initiatives like public transit. Personally, I think that type of response is an abdication of public health responsibility.

Because the context of this is a growing hospital and health care crisis, which for the past few weeks we have heard about in terms of children's hospitals and RSV, flu, and COVID - but it has been, and remains, an extreme and worsening crisis in most hospitals across the province and elsewhere. It is getting worse and very little if anything continues to be done to support the suffering hospital workers and hospital capacity.

So the other side of things is to reduce the demand on the health care system.

Which in other words, is about protecting the health of people in the community.

The prevailing hypothesis - in my opinion, backed up with some references at the link below - for the increase in severe health problems that are currently being experienced, is some sort of immunity damage from people having had COVID infections.

So, protecting people from COVID - as well as reducing the spread of RSV and flu currently - is both in the overall long-term interest and also will help with the current crisis in hospitals.

There are two fairly recent studies that both measured a significant decrease in COVID spread in schools where mask mandates were in effect, versus ones that either didn't have or removed mask mandates:

- * the 'Boston study' (from Harvard); and,
- * the 'Alberta study' (obtained from the Alberta government in court disclosure).

There is more that could be said on this topic, but I think this is the most relevant points for your consideration.

And to repeat, I urge you to implement a mask mandate, and remove any policies preventing ventilation improvements in classrooms

Sincerely,

- Greg Macdougall

Ottawa

* *References:*

<https://equitableeducation.ca/2022/deputation-for-public-health-hospital-crisis>