



Dawn Danko
Chair of the Board of Trustees
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
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March 30, 2021

Hon. Christine Elliot
MPP, Minister of Health
5th Floor 777 Bay St. Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Hon. Stephen Lecce
MPP, Minister of Education
315 Front Street, 14th Floor Toronto, ON M7A 0B8

Dear Ministers Elliot and Lecce,

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I am sharing our urgent request that Ontario immediately vaccinate front-line education workers to support the safe operation of schools.

At Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), education workers are being challenged like never before as they support the safety of students and staff in schools during a pandemic. We know how important schools are to our families, community and economy. But cracks are beginning to show.

Our staff absences are rising to alarming levels, especially in elementary schools. We see unfilled absences daily across all employee groups. During the week of March 15, we had an average of 15 to 17 per cent of staff absences due to COVID-19 entries into the system; the week of March 22 saw this figure rise to a disturbing 20 to 24 per cent. This is not sustainable.

We need stability now, and as we plan for the 2021-22 school year. One way to do this is to vaccinate education workers immediately.

Staff have worked tirelessly to keep schools open. We want this to continue. However, we must also advocate for any measure that will keep our staff and students safe. Students need continuity; families need stability; and education workers need a vaccine.

In Hamilton schools, COVID-19 case numbers are soaring. In December, a month that precipitated a shutdown, we had 116 cases and eight outbreaks. In March, we have already had 209 cases and nine outbreaks in schools.

This pandemic is not over and has more unknowns ahead. For this reason, we respectfully request the responsible decision to vaccinate education workers as soon as possible.

HWDSB

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Together, we can ensure the health, safety and well-being of students and staff.

Sincerely,



Dawn Danko
Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

cc: Ontario Public School Boards' Association
Chairs of all Ontario School Boards
All Hamilton City Councilors
All Hamilton Members of Parliament
All Hamilton Members of Provincial Parliament