

Local News

EMSB parents' committee wants schools to remain closed until September

Montreal Gazette
1 day ago • 2 minute read



The parents' committee says the next few months would be better spent "preparing for a well-organized, safe return to school in September" or later. JOHN MAHONEY / Montreal Gazette file photo

The parents committee of the English Montreal School Board, is "strongly" recommending that schools in Quebec reopen in September at the earliest and only if it is then deemed safe by health authorities.

In a statement made public Monday, the committee acknowledges that "some experts feel reopening this spring would provide immunization to our children, who most often do not suffer serious effects from COVID-19 and that this herd immunization could help our health-care system manage the mix of COVID and flu cases next fall and winter."



However, the committee maintains that even if a spring return to work would allow Quebec's economy to restart, "we believe a premature return to school does not offer a large enough benefit to offset all the potential negative consequences."

Saying a return to class in May "would be highly complex and put students, their families and staff at risk," the committee argues that it doubts "the educational benefits offered by a month and a half of school with teachers missing, classes half-full, separation measures, online classes for students unable to attend in person, etc. will be sufficient to justify the enormous risks."

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The committee says that the next few months would be better spent "preparing for a well-organized, safe return to school in September (or later, if deemed necessary). This would include the establishment of a well-functioning online teaching system for all Quebec public schools, including teacher training, a procedure to provide computers or tablets to students who require them, as well as support for internet access for students in need."

The committee is also asking that the province clarify the conditions that must be met to determine that it is safe for children to return to school.

"Once a return-to-school date is set, clear guidance is required on the sanitary procedures that must be followed to prevent the infection of students, teachers, staff, and families, as well as the measures that must be followed if a child or staff member is infected with COVID-19. "

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The committee also wants the provincial government to establish opt-out protocols for parents who refuse to send their children to school because they deem it unsafe, particularly for children or family members with pre-existing health conditions.

Note to readers: We know the speed and volume of coronavirus-related news is overwhelming and a little frightening. To help with that, we will dedicate a Montreal Gazette reporter each day to devote their time to synthesizing the most important coronavirus-related news, especially as it relates to life in Montreal and Quebec. Follow the updates for April 20 right here. All our coronavirus-related news can always be found

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