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# Teachers, union call plans to reopen Montreal schools dangerous

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### Educators uneasy as back-to-school date looms

Teachers' unions say educators are worried about their safety as schools in Montreal get set to reopen on May 18.

### Mayor addresses situation in Montreal North

Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante on how the city is handling the rise in cases in Montreal North and how to address physical distancing.

### Legault tries to reassure concerned Quebecers

Quebec Premier Francois Legault says he won't hesitate to hold off on reopening schools if COVID-19 cases worsen

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MONTREAL – While the Quebec government has designated May 19 as the day when Montreal's schools will re-open, numerous teachers and a union have expressed concern over safety.

Michael Cirella, a physical education teacher at Westmount Park Elementary, said he fears bringing COVID-19 home.

"I have a newborn of just eight weeks so I'm terrified of going in and potentially getting the virus, not knowing and potentially going back to my wife who's breastfeeding and my newborn," he said. "It's terrifying."

Cirella expressed concerns over the feasibility of maintaining physical distancing measures and ensuring mass handwashing.

"In our building, we have one boys' washroom and one girls' washroom for all three floors. The kids would have to go downstairs to enter the bathrooms," he said. "We have broken sinks, we have one functional soap dispenser."

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Heidi Yetman of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers said her union is concerned over the difficulty of getting young children to follow distancing and handwashing rules.

"If we don't have those two public health guidelines followed, right away we're walking into a building that's not safe," she said.

English Montreal School Board spokesperson Mike Cohen said that while preparations are a challenge, the board believes the schools will be ready.

"We have a protocol. They're going to be reporting back to work next week, they're going to have plenty of time to get that under their belts," he said.

But Yetman said more time is needed.

"I don't think it's being done right at all to tell you the truth," she said.

While Premier Francois Legault has acknowledged his plan to reopen schools comes with risks, he's maintained it's relatively low. On Thursday, he said he would [push back the opening date if the pandemic worsens](#).

Yetman said she believes the point of the plan is to free up parents to go back to work.

"This is a daycare service we're offering. That's what it's about. It's about getting the economy rolling again," she said.

Cirella said many teachers are so concerned, they aren't planning to send their own children back to school.

"That speaks volumes. They're the ones who know what's going on in schools," he said. "They know social distancing isn't possible."

While classes don't begin until May 19, teachers are due to return to work on Monday. However, schools in the rest of Quebec are scheduled to open a week earlier than Montreal, which is the epicentre of COVID-19. But Eastern Townships School Board Chairman Michael Murray said his board is taking precautions as well.

"We have independently purchased from private suppliers a certain quantity of protective equipment, which will be available for use on demand," he said.

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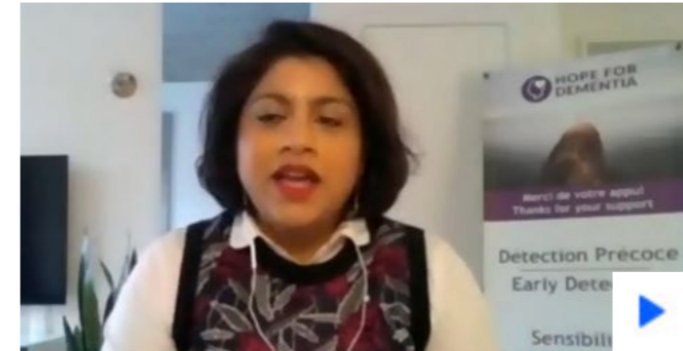
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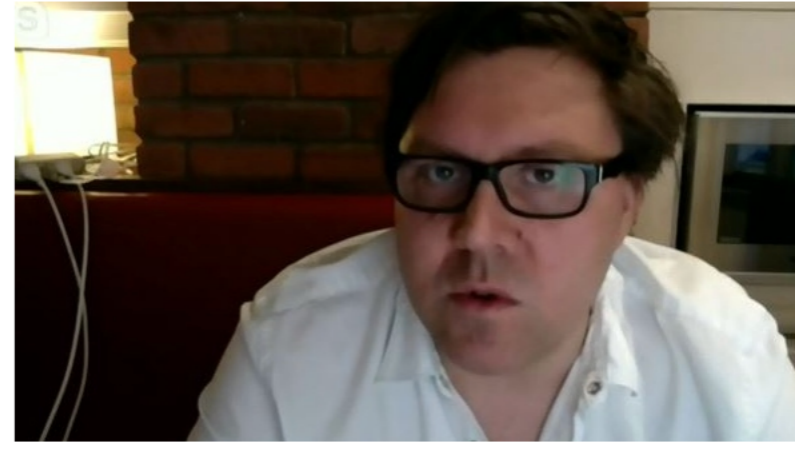
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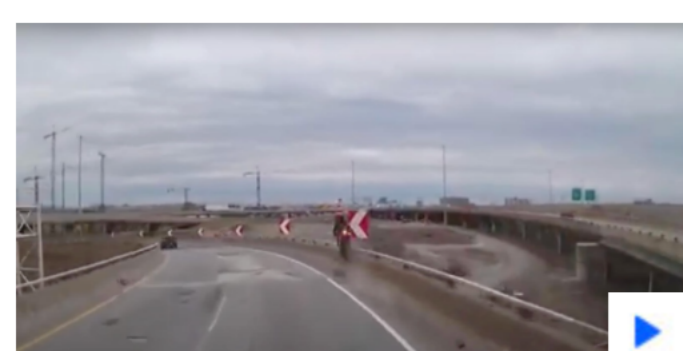
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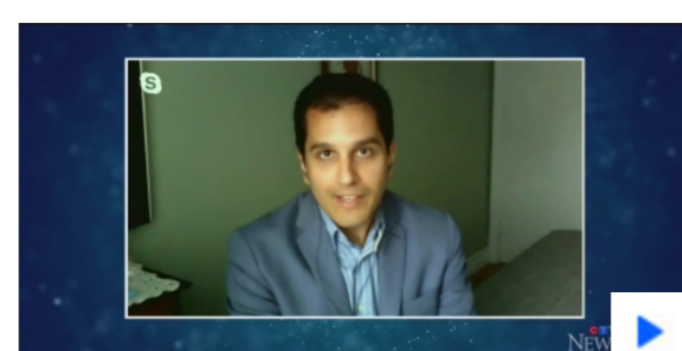
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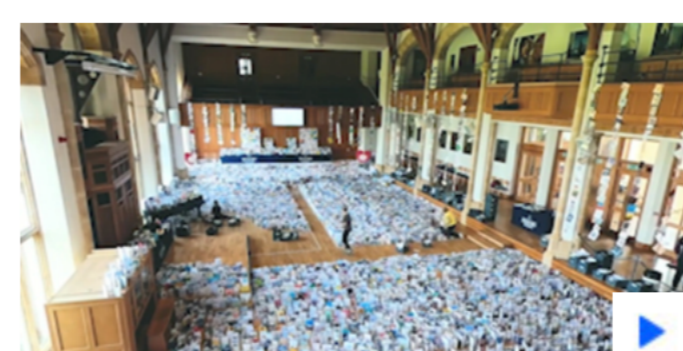
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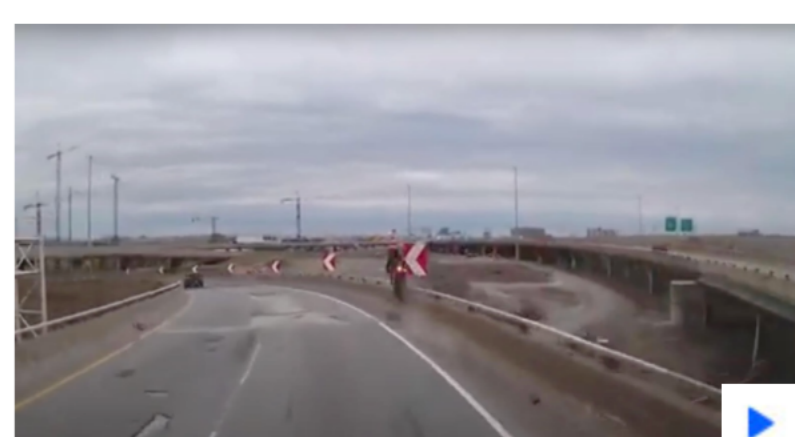


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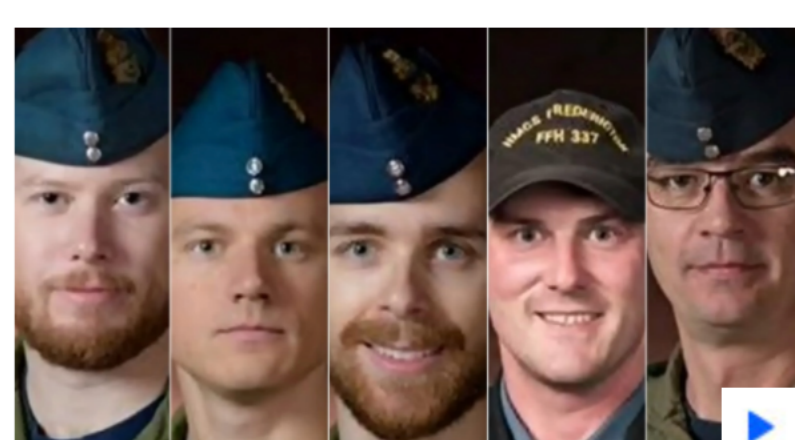
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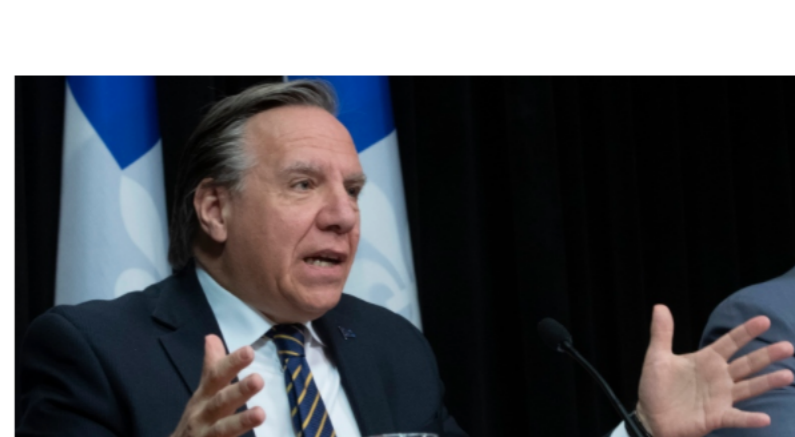
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