

Oppose efforts to censor Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee!

Our reporter
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The recently established Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (CERSC) was prevented from sharing its founding statement on the “Quebec Parents Stand Together” Facebook page—a page whose ostensible purpose is to organize opposition to the right-wing provincial government’s criminal response to the coronavirus pandemic. In response to this act of censorship, Laurent Lafrance, a leading member of the CERSC and an educator at a Montreal-area school, addressed the following letter of protest to the page’s administrators.

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To the administrators of the Facebook page “Quebec Parents Stand Together”:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (CERSC) to strongly protest your arbitrary decision not to publish our founding statement on your page. I urge you to reverse this decision so that all your members can be made aware of our committee’s struggle to close schools and save lives.

When one of our members asked for an explanation as to why our statement has been censored, one of your administrators responded with two interrelated arguments to which I wish to respond: first, that our statement is “strongly political”; and second, that our strategy is not “legal” as it does not conform to the structures of tripartite government–management–union cooperation enshrined in Quebec’s reactionary labour laws

Whether you like it or not, educators and parents are already involved in a political struggle. We have just marked the sad first anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic—a pandemic that was foreseeable and foreseen. As in capitalist countries the world over, the Quebec government led by François Legault’s CAQ, as

well as the federal Liberal government and provincial governments across Canada, have prioritized corporate profits and safeguarding the wealth of the financial elite over protecting human lives.

The main reason they reopened schools at the end of the summer and have kept them open as COVID-19 cases have soared more than eight-fold is so that parents can be freed from childcare obligations and pushed into returning to work and churning out profits for big business. In doing so, governments and school boards have flouted the recommendations of health experts, over everything from the need for better ventilation to the reopening policy itself, and ignored numerous scientific studies that show schools are important vectors in COVID-19 transmission. The results have been catastrophic: a second wave that claimed more than 10,000 lives across Canada, and a rapidly emerging third wave driven by even more-infectious variants, whose very existence testifies to the criminality of the back-to-work/back-to-school policies pursued by big business governments around the world. The *British Medical Journal*, one of the world’s most renowned medical publications, aptly summed up the ruling elite’s response as “social murder.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the political establishment and their media mouthpieces have called for “national unity,” claiming that we are all “in this together.” The reality is that while the wealthiest have gotten richer like never before, working people and their families are being exposed to deadly conditions.

By censoring political discussion, whether you are conscious of it or not, you are assisting the Legault government, its political allies, and corporate backers in suppressing social opposition to its ruinous mishandling of the pandemic. Yet the facts demonstrate that unless and until educators, parents and the working

class as a whole intervene, a science-based response based on saving lives not profits will not be pursued. Rather, the selfish profit interests of the capitalists will prevail.

As for your second argument, we strongly object to the claim that as educators fighting to protect our health and lives, we are engaged in “illegal” activity because we refuse to subordinate ourselves to the unions. Workers have every right to refuse to work in unsafe conditions, not to mention the fundamental democratic right to openly debate and discuss the political programs and policies necessary to advance their interests without the autocratic interference of the employer or its union partners.

The basis of your argument is that workers must submit to the tripartite government–management–union system codified in pro-employer labour relations systems in every province across Canada. This is the same mechanism that has ensured that schools remain open in the midst of a pandemic, and that has suppressed any opposition by educators and parents to the CAQ’s murderous policies. It is through this mechanism that the establishment, in collaboration with the unions, have divided Canadian workers along provincial lines to prevent the united action of workers across the country. If it is not “legal” within this system to talk about how to protect the lives of teachers, students, and their relatives amid a raging pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 2.6 million people worldwide, this only goes to show that the system itself is rotten and a political struggle is required to replace it.

We argue that it is only through a pan-Canadian mobilization, independent of the corporatist trade unions and state institutions, that workers in Quebec and Canada can defend themselves and save lives. You may be opposed to our perspective, but the members of your page have every right to learn about it and to make up their own minds.

For these reasons, I reiterate my request that you review your decision and immediately publish our statement on your page.

Sincerely,

Laurent Lafrance for the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee

The CERSC will hold its next meeting on Sunday, March 21, at 1 p.m. Eastern time. For more information on how to participate or get involved in

the committee’s activities, visit the CERSC Facebook page or e-mail ceresc.csppb@gmail.com.



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