

Canadian educators and students endorse October 1 international school strike to stop spread of COVID-19

Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
29 September 2021

Members and supporters of the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Committee are campaigning throughout the country to promote the October 1 school strike called for by British parent Lisa Diaz. The CERSC, which was set up by educators last spring, calls for the closure of schools to in-person learning with full compensation to all workers affected until the pandemic is brought under control.

Educators, parents, and students have responded with enthusiasm to the strike call. Lisa is urging parents to keep their kids home from school this Friday and post a picture of their school uniform to social media. The CERSC will be holding an online meeting to discuss the significance of this protest and the need for an international eradication strategy against COVID-19 this Sunday, October 3, at 1 p.m. Eastern. **To attend, please email cersc.csppb@gmail.com.**

A student from Ontario endorsed the strike, telling us, “As a high school student in Ontario, I understand the barriers that COVID-19 has placed on education. However, Canada’s response to helping students has been consistently disappointing these past months. I fully support Lisa Diaz in her call for a strike in order to push the government to take more action and protect me and my classmates from this deadly virus.”

A parent from British Columbia, where numerous parents have announced on social media that they intend to participate in the strike Friday, commented, “My name is Angel and I am the parent of 2 children in grades 1-3. I strongly feel that schools in BC and many other jurisdictions are not safe for children and the many staff who care for them. The lack of protective measures to mitigate the spread of Covid in schools is causing great harm to our children and to our communities. I am calling on fellow parents and caregivers of children to keep their kids at home this October 1st. Let your government know that we demand safe education for our children and safe work for our education staff.”

The widespread support for the school strike reflects

mounting popular opposition to the criminal open-economy/open-schools policy pursued by all governments across the country and which has now produced a deadly fourth wave of the pandemic. The epicentre of COVID-19 infections and deaths is currently Alberta, where the health care system is on the brink of collapse. In the province’s major hospitals doctors have begun implementing triage, choosing who cannot be offered life-saving treatment due to shortages of ICU beds, ventilators and staff. As of last week, more than one third of Alberta’s active cases were among children and young people aged 19 and under. Over 1,400 cases have been recorded in Ontario’s schools in the three weeks since they reopened, including 174 last Friday alone. In British Columbia, the infection rate among children aged 0-19 rose from 12 per 100,000 on September 1 to 19 per 100,000 on September 23.

Articles and videos urging support for the strike have been shared widely online. Zero Covid Canada, an organization established to advocate for an elimination strategy, tweeted its endorsement of the protest. “Zero Covid Canada supports the Oct 1st Parents Strike! Read our statement for ways to take action and please add your name and/or your organization in support of the strike,” the tweet read.

In a longer statement, Zero Covid Canada explained, “There is nothing inevitable about our children catching COVID-19. The Parents Strike is in response to the utter lack of measures in schools to protect children who are not and cannot yet be vaccinated...Canada—especially the ‘COVID provinces’: BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec—have not put in place the necessary measures for our children to safely go to schools. It is well known at this point in the pandemic that COVID is airborne, that ventilation, filtration (with HEPA filters) and adequate mask wearing (M95 and equivalent) greatly reduce the risk of transmission indoors. It is also clear at this point that children are affected by COVID-19 too. Despite all this knowledge, our governments have refused to put [in place]

measures, resources and equipment to protect people, especially unvaccinated children.”

Ken, a parent from Toronto, said, “I’m supporting Lisa Diaz and the strike by choosing to keep my kids home and learning remotely. Schools are just not safe. Our lying provincial Chief Medical Officer, Kieran Moore, tells us that our kids don’t spread the virus when the data shows that he’s lying like a drunk in the ditch!”

Another supporter of the strike sent the CERSC the following statement: “I am an educator from Quebec and I fully support the strike movement initiated by the British parents. We are experiencing exactly the same reality in Canada. The federal government of Justin Trudeau and its provincial allies, regardless of their political color (Liberals, Conservatives, NDP or CAQ in Quebec), are pursuing a murderous policy that favors the profits of the banks and big business over human lives and the protection of workers. The unions, who are close collaborators of Trudeau, have done everything to allow the reopening of the capitalist economy and to force us back into unsafe schools. Over 27,700 Canadians have lost their lives prematurely because of these disastrous policies. How many people have suffered and will continue to suffer? How many children and youth will be threatened by the arrival of new variants?”

“My wife and my children caught the virus last year, but we have this permanent fear of catching the more virulent Delta variant. This has to stop! The October 1 strike is the beginning of an international counter-offensive. We will mobilize in Canada to spread the fight!”

Malcolm, a teacher, wrote, “Lisa, your call for a parent’s strike is a beacon of light in a pandemic of darkness. Thank you! Every day it is becoming clearer that the only way to eradicate Covid-19 is through the organization of independent, grass roots, popular organizations that promote and advocate the health and safety of its members. The longer the ruling class promotes policies of disease and death, the more resistance calls such as yours, will grow! Thank you again for your courage.”

A parent from Quebec who endorsed the strike explained some of her concerns. “Knowing that our children aged 11 and under are not vaccinated and knowing that Long COVID affects an alarming number, I consider that the measures in place in our schools are insufficient,” she said. “The same goes for our older children who come back to their siblings every evening.” She appealed for the “precautionary principle” to guide a series of mitigation measures to reduce the risk of infection. These include “permanent masking (type N95) and recognition that the virus is spread by aerosols; bubble-classes, and isolation of people in contact with a positive case; adding air purifiers; compulsory vaccination for school personnel; regular screening of

students using rapid tests.”

The CERSC believes that these necessary mitigation measures can be effective only to the extent that they are deployed as part of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate and eradicate the virus. The current level of community transmission makes it unsafe for in-person learning to take place under any circumstances. Once infections have been reduced to zero, schools and other facilities can reopen with mitigation measures in place.

The closure of schools to in-person learning and of all nonessential production must be combined with full compensation for all affected workers, paid for out of the profits accumulated over the past 18 months by the pandemic profiteers among the super-rich oligarchy. This strategy requires the mass mobilization of educators, parents, students, and their supporters among all sections of working people to fight for a pandemic response that places the protection of human life ahead of the piling up of corporate profits.

As the CERSC wrote in a recently published statement, “Scientists have convincingly demonstrated that by combining public health measures, school and business closures, travel bans, and vaccines, COVID-19 could be extinguished within two months. Since this strategy is only viable in the long-term on a global scale, the CERSC fights for its implementation in close collaboration with our sister educator rank-and-file committees in Britain, the US, Germany, and Australia.”

For more information about the CERSC or to attend this Sunday’s online meeting, please email: cersc.csppb@gmail.com.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact