

Rank-and-file Canadian educators to hold emergency meeting this Sunday to fight for COVID-19 elimination strategy

Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
7 January 2022

Under conditions of a massive Omicron-driven surge in infections and hospitalizations, the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (CERSC) will hold an emergency meeting this Sunday, January 9, at 1 p.m. Eastern Time to discuss the fight for a Zero COVID strategy. *To participate in the meeting, email the CERSC at: ceresc.csppb@gmail.com*

Sunday's meeting has been called in response to hitherto unheard-of levels of COVID-19 infection. On Friday, the federal government's daily epidemiology update reported 43,148 new infections, the highest total since the pandemic began. Across Canada, there are currently 376,670 active COVID-19 cases, including more than 100,000 each in Quebec and Ontario. To put this in perspective, over 15 percent of the 2.43 million registered infections since the pandemic have occurred in just the past two weeks.

Hospitalizations are skyrocketing. In Ontario, 2,472 people were receiving treatment in hospital as of Friday, the largest number at any point during the pandemic. Hospitalizations have approximately doubled since Tuesday, when Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliott announced they had surpassed 1,200. And 338 patients are currently in intensive care.

As horrific as these statistics are, they underestimate the extent of the virus' spread. Canada's testing infrastructure has been overwhelmed by Omicron, with provincial governments imposing restrictions on PCR tests. Even the less reliable rapid tests are impossible to obtain for large sections of the population.

The current catastrophe is the direct product of the policies pursued by Justin Trudeau's federal Liberal government and its provincial counterparts. They all let Omicron run rampant after it was first detected in

November, even though it was established very early on that it could evade vaccine immunity and was much more infectious. As the CERSC explained in its recent statement calling for an elimination strategy in response to the spread of the new variant, "Omicron's properties—its unprecedented infectiousness and ability to evade vaccines—represent a serious medical problem, but the principal reason it is having a devastating impact is political."

Confronted with a looming health care crisis of their own making, and widespread public anger over their disregard for the population's health, provincial governments felt forced to delay the return to school in the new year. Both Ontario and Quebec announced schools would not reopen for in-person learning prior to January 17, while British Columbia delayed the start of the school term by a week from January 3 to January 10.

Teachers, students, parents, and their families were no doubt relieved by this temporary reprieve. However, the provincial governments are already laying the groundwork to reopen schools with no additional protections in place, which would produce yet another upsurge in infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. This was precisely what happened in early 2021, when Premiers Ford and Legault prematurely reopened schools after they were forced to shut them at the height of Canada's second wave. The result was last spring's third wave of infections, which claimed over 5,000 lives.

If an even worse disaster is to be averted, everything depends on the independent political mobilization of educators and working people more broadly. Throughout the pandemic the trade unions have

smothered worker opposition to the ruling elite's open economy/open schools policy. Now, as all sections of the political establishment explicitly embrace the fascistic policy of "herd immunity," the unions have no intention of lifting a finger to oppose a reckless reopening of schools.

"The CERSC demands a halt to this policy of social murder," we declared in our most recent statement. "We urge education workers, parents, students, and other workers across the country to join our struggle for an elimination strategy by establishing rank-and-file safety committees in their workplaces and neighbourhoods. These committees should call for the closure of schools, universities, colleges, and all nonessential production with full wages paid to workers and their families until the pandemic is brought under control. Vast resources must be made available to provide every student with the technology and comfortable environment required to participate in online learning from home. In addition, a huge expansion of social and health care services is required to help children, their families, and education workers cope with the devastating impact the ruling elite's policy of mass infection and death has had on mental health and wellbeing, and to provide care for the growing numbers stricken by Long COVID."

We strongly urge everyone who agrees with this program to register to attend the CERSC's emergency meeting this Sunday, January 9, at 1 p.m. Eastern Time. To attend and/or find out more about the CERSC's work, email us at cersc.csppb@gmail.com.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact