

# Clean Indoor Air Toronto

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## Provincial Takeover of TDSB Puts Students' Health At Risk

### Critical Gap Between the Country's Largest School System and its Largest Public Health Agency Highlighted by Clean Indoor Air Toronto

The Ford government's decision to put the TDSB under supervision may have devastating repercussions this respiratory virus season, highlights Clean Indoor Air Toronto (CIATO), a local grassroots advocacy group dedicated to improving indoor air quality.

"We're entering a time of year when the spread of contagious, airborne diseases increases," says CIATO spokesperson Louise Hiding, Ph.D. "While for some, these illnesses just lead to a few days of feeling miserable, for others they result in missed days of school and work, and in some cases, they can even trigger hospitalization and/or serious and potentially long-term health problems, including heart conditions, asthma, and neurological issues."

She adds that with the right knowledge and tools, TDSB staff and families can reduce their odds of getting sick this winter. Unfortunately, that vital information may not reach that audience due to the removal of school trustees.

Prior to entering supervision, a TDSB or a TCDSB trustee sat on the Toronto Board of Health (BOH) and acted as a vital link between the public school community and Toronto Public Health (TPH). Additionally, the School Board Advisory Committee, the main liaison between City Hall and Toronto's four public school boards, has been paused.

"Given the TDSB's growing challenges with staff-related sick days, it is absolutely vital that teachers and their colleagues be given accurate, actionable information on how they can protect themselves and their students from airborne illnesses such as the flu, pneumonia and RSV," explains CIATO member Heather Pun.

CIATO believes that reinstating TDSB and TCDSB trustees would be the most efficient way to achieve this goal. However, in the absence of trustees, CIATO calls for the BOH and Toronto Public Health to step forward and take a more vocal and proactive approach to communicating with TDSB students and staff, "For example," details Louise Hiding, "The Board can direct TPH to issue indoor air quality guidelines for classrooms that align with [Health Canada's recently issued IAQ guidance](#), and

at the very least, match the City's own [IAQ policy for its offices](#); these guidelines can then be used by building operators to improve the air quality in schools. Our kids and educators deserve the same quality of indoor air."

Given that we're seeing an earlier and more aggressive flu season in places such as [Japan](#), and a surge in COVID-19 infections in [some U.S. states](#), CIATO believes that it is essential that the BOH and TPH enact clear, consistent communication with TDSB staff and students as soon as possible. It notes that one model TPH could emulate is the messaging currently being shared by the California Department of Public Health, which has been issued in response to that state's increase in COVID cases.

Adds Louise Hiding, "The bottom line is that many of these infections can be prevented, keeping kids and teachers in class and saving both the education and the health system dollars. But the first step in keeping people healthy is providing them with the right information. Unfortunately, the suspension of trustees may create a barrier that results in more teachers and kids getting sick this winter."

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About CIATO: Formally launched in 2024, CIATO is a Toronto-based grassroots advocacy group focused on improving indoor air quality in our built environments by championing science-backed solutions, legislation, ongoing monitoring of indoor air, and other forms of accountability. Driven by a mission to safeguard public health, the group works with experts, policymakers and communities to raise awareness about the impact of indoor air quality on the health and well-being of Toronto's residents and share steps that can be taken to clean the air we breathe.

For more information, including arranging an interview with a CIATO spokesperson, please contact: [team@cleanindoorairto.ca](mailto:team@cleanindoorairto.ca)