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Local News

EMSB to consider making masks mandatory in classrooms

Will debate resolution at Sept. 1 council meeting

Montreal Gazette

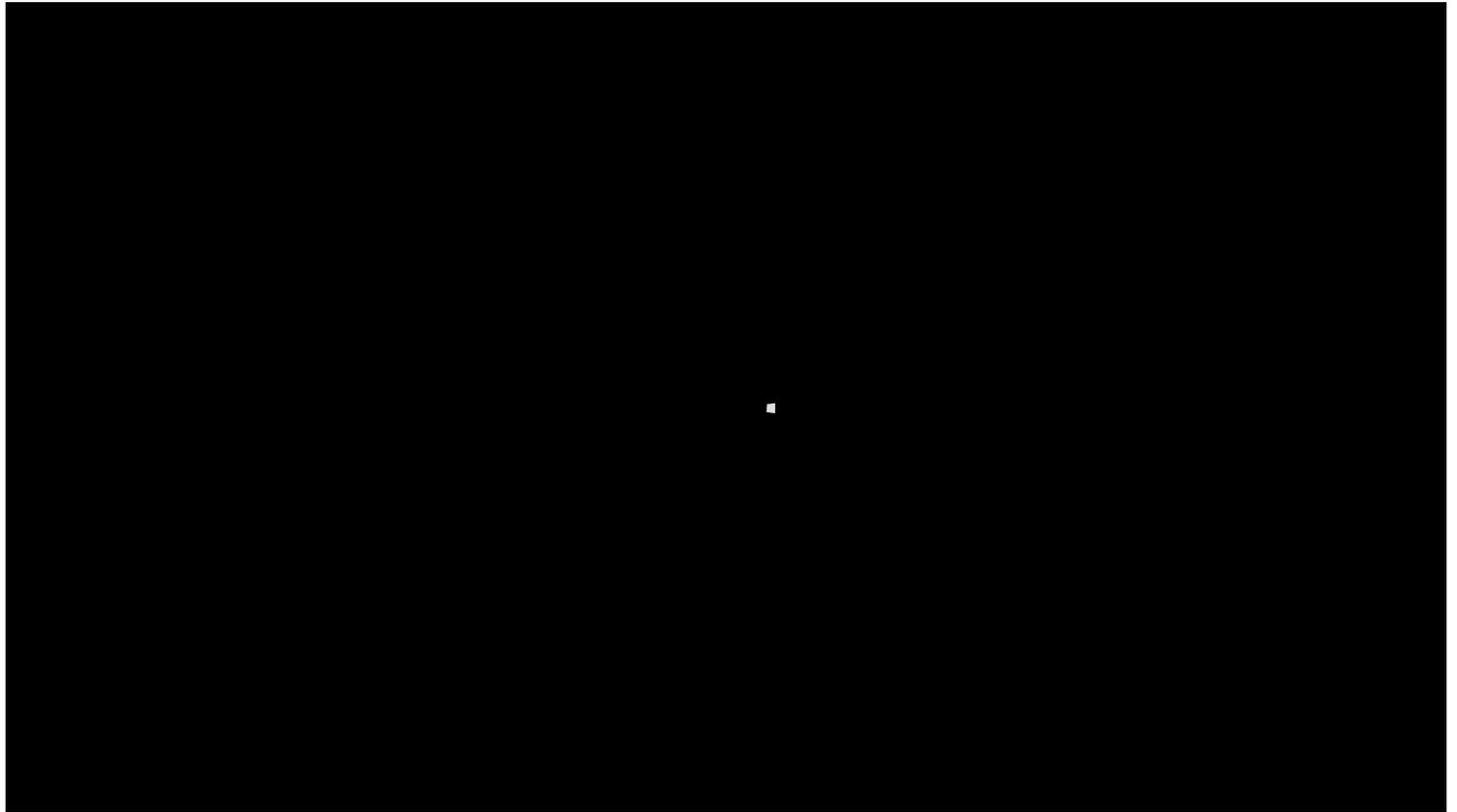
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EMSB Chair Joe Ortona, centre, speaks to McGill premed student and Royal Vale School summer employee Devon Haseltine, left and head caretaker Kostas Maniatias about the school opening preparations in Montreal, on Wednesday, August 11, 2021. PHOTO BY ALLEN MCINNIS /Montreal Gazette files

The English Montreal School Board will consider making masks mandatory in classrooms for all grades this fall, the board's Council of Commissioners announced late Sunday.

The council said that "after consulting with stakeholders" including the EMSB Parents Committee and English Parents' Committee Association last week, it would consider a resolution for such a mandate at its Sept. 1 meeting, one day after the start of classes. EMSB chair Joe Ortona said "we strongly encourage the wearing of masks for the first two days of school until the Council can discuss this in more detail," according to the council's statement.



"There was a clear consensus that the Minister of Education's announcement that masks would not be required in classrooms has created a tremendous amount of anxiety," the council said. "EMSB Director General Nicholas Katalifos added that this is a matter of safety for all staff and students."

This month, the Quebec government revealed its back-to-school plan and said class bubbles and masks in classrooms would no longer be required. Students would still have to wear masks in common areas but can take them off in class. The EMSB said it would continue to lobby for the government to change its mind.

About three-quarters of the eligible population of Quebec is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, but children under 12 are not yet eligible to take the vaccine, making elementary schools vulnerable.

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