

# Coronavirus: Quebec promises an 'updated' back-to-school plan next week <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Quebec will wait several more days before submitting an "updated" plan for the start of the school year.

Health Minister Christian Dubé said Monday that it will be presented next week.

In comparison, Ontario unveiled a detailed plan on July 30, including the obligation to wear masks starting in Grade 4.

"It's an understatement to say that we are at the last minute," said co-spokesperson for Quebec solidaire (QS) Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois in an interview on Monday. "The silence of the minister of education is deafening."

"There's only three weeks left before the start of the school year and several questions remain," says Liberal education spokesperson Marwah Rizqy.

"It is very clear that it is not clear."

For example, she says, what will be done if a student has COVID-19? Who will be isolated? Will wearing a mask be compulsory in high school? What support will be offered to students in need of extra help?

"We are talking about the minister's responsibility. It takes leadership in times of crisis and at the moment, he is (absent)."

Rizqy asked Jean-François Roberge to convene a meeting with the opposition parties this week.

The education minister turned down The Canadian Press's request for an interview on Monday. But during a press conference in Montreal, his colleague, Dubé, tried to be reassuring.

"There are a lot of questions about schools," he said. "We will ... make sure there are no inconsistencies."

## **Wearing a mask at school?**

Roberge presented in June the outline of a plan which notably introduces the concept of "bubbles" of six pupils. But he hasn't made any updates or clarifications since.

However, the situation has changed this summer, insists Rizqy.

Wearing a mask has in particular become compulsory for those aged 12 and over in public places and on public transport.

Does this mean that the high school student will have to wear the mask at school? said Rizqy, who asks the government to be "consistent" and to explain its choices.

According to her, if the masks are required in schools, the government will have to buy a large quantity, to be able to provide them to the students.

"The minister, has he made massive purchases of masks? She asks. He knows that delivery times are long."

## **Blind spot**

For her part, the PQ member Véronique Hivon believes that the educational monitoring of the student is the real "blind spot" of the government at present.

"I cannot believe that we have reached August 3 and that we do not have a clearer and more precise plan, and above all, investments announced to support schools on ... the issues of support," she said in an interview.

According to Nadeau-Dubois, students in difficulty "in the best case will have stagnated, but in some cases will have regressed".

“It would defraud us an effort similar to that which was made in the health network to replenish schools, to send more people than ever to our schools to help students,” he said.

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