

Ministry of Education

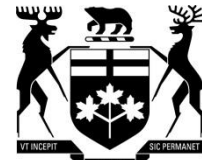
Minister

315 Front Street West
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
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Ontario

August 26, 2020

Dear Parents,

We are committed to ensuring the return to school is safe for students, teachers and staff. Our comprehensive plan for reopening schools leads the country in robust public health protocols and per-pupil funding.

Money will be going towards personal protective equipment (PPE), enhanced cleaning of our schools and buses, improving ventilation, and hiring more cleaning and teaching staff. We are also adopting additional public health protocols for our schools, such as the hiring of up to 500 public health nurses, an aggressive mandatory masking policy for grades 4-12, and a surveillance testing strategy on our secondary school students. We believe these measures are essential to ensure a successful return to our classrooms.

Earlier today, our government announced the details of how we will prevent and minimize COVID-19 outbreaks in our schools and keep our kids safe. This [document](#) has been informed by advice from leading medical and scientific experts — including the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Our government's back-to-school plan is being further enhanced by additional federal investments and resources to support the return to class in the fall. Today's [federal announcement](#) provides \$381 million to Ontario, on top of the nearly \$900 million provided by the province to support provincial back-to-school plans.

I am also pleased to confirm that Dr. Dirk Huyer has been appointed as Coordinator, Provincial Outbreak Response to lead the province's efforts to respond to any challenges within our schools.

Here's what you need to know:

- A protocol has been developed to deal with students who become ill while they are at school, including isolation, and providing PPE to the ill student and staff attending to them.
- Parents are being asked to screen their children every day before school, and if they are ill, to keep them home.
- If someone in a school, whether that be a student, or staff member, tests positive for COVID-19, the school community is properly notified. Immediate and rigorous contact tracing kicks in.

- Where required, class cohorts will be recommended for testing, sent home, or the school will be closed until public health officials determine it is safe for students and staff to return.
- There will be a clear communications process followed, so you will know if a student or staff member in your child's school tests positive for COVID-19.
- School boards will work closely with public health units to communicate updates in real time and determine whether a class or school must be closed.
- Led by Public Health Ontario, the government intends to surveillance test asymptomatic secondary students in our schools.
- On top of having public health nurses in our schools, education staff will have completed rigorous professional development on health and safety.

We are being cautious, we are implementing extra health and safety measures and we are investing the necessary dollars. As the Premier and I have said before: we will do whatever it takes, and we will be there for the safety, protection, and well-being of Ontario's students.

While the public health situation across Ontario continues to evolve, the one constant is the united effort of parents, students, and school staff to keep our communities and province safe. We are all doing our part, and it is truly remarkable to see the work that can be accomplished as we flatten the COVID-19 curve across Ontario.

We have increased investments in mental health because we know how difficult this period has been on your child. We will continue to ensure access to supports are available, and that our schools continue to represent inclusion, compassion, and optimism in the hearts and minds of all our students.

Thank you, Ontario's parents, for all that you do each and every day – as we work together for the safety and success of our children this school year, and well into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Lecce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

The Honourable Stephen Lecce,
Minister of Education