

August 14, 2020

Toronto Board of Health Members

Re: Update on Toronto Public Health Recommendations for School Re-openings

Dear colleagues,

In advance of schools re-opening this fall, Toronto Public Health has provided recommendations to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) in a letter today. I have included the letter as an attachment.

As we continue learning how to live with the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto Public Health has acknowledged that the importance of in-person learning for both children and parents must be balanced with the risks of COVID-19 transmission in schools. With this in mind, Toronto Public Health and our Medical Officer of Health Dr. Eileen de Villa have suggested additional recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Education's initial plan, *COVID-19: Reopening Schools*.

The recommendations include the following:

- Ensuring that class sizes are limited to allow physical distancing of 2 metres between all students;
- Strongly encouraging masks for younger students (below Grade 4) where possible;
- Prioritizing resources for schools in high-transmission and high-needs areas;
- Piloting a saliva-based testing option that could be used in homes and schools;
- Implementing active daily screening practices; and,
- Encouraging a flexible start date in order to allow school boards and schools time to prepare and incorporate public health recommendations.

While Toronto has made tremendous progress on reducing transmission, COVID-19 is still a threat in our city. Re-opening schools will be a significant test of how we handle the next stage of our response to this virus. As many experts have noted, physical distancing is the most important tool we have to combat the spread of COVID-19. In many classrooms, this will mean that significant adjustments need to be made – but I am confident that if we continue to follow the guidance of our public health experts, as we have since January, we will have taken the steps needed for a safe re-opening of schools.

I want to thank you all for your commitment and hard work over in recent months, and to acknowledge the dedication of our Trustee Members Stephanie Donaldson and Ida Li Preti to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Joe



Councillor Joe Cressy
Chair, Toronto Board of Health
Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York
416 392 4044
councillor_cressy@toronto.ca