

Safety of schools remains priority number one for Ontario^[1]

More than 100,000 students return to in-person learning with enhanced safety measures to protect against COVID-19

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AVAILABILITY

Access online^[2]

EXCERPT

TORONTO - Today, Stephen Lecce, Ontario's Minister of Education, issued the following statement to provide an update on the return to in-person learning for schools in seven Public Health Units:

"Our priority throughout this pandemic has been to keep students and staff safe.

On the advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and following the introduction of additional and tougher layers of protection, more than 100,000 students will return to in-person learning on January 25, 2021.

Ontario has the most comprehensive and highest funded school safety plan in Canada, which includes the largest increase in teacher and staff hiring, an enhanced screening and masking policy, and the highest investment in ventilation improvements. In advance of a return to class, the government will also be implementing provincewide targeted asymptomatic testing, more comprehensive screening protocols, and mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3 and outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained. These new safeguards have been informed by medical leaders and the best available evidence in Canada.

SickKids confirmed that the return to school this past fall was successful at a time when community transmission was low. While leading medical experts have stated that schools in Ontario remain safe, with school boards reporting approximately 80% of schools at the end of last year not reporting an active case, and 99.6% of students never having reported a case of COVID-19, we will continue to review our plan and ensure it provides our schools with the latest safety measures and protocols so our students and staff have maximum protection.

In areas of the province where students continue to learn remotely, the families of frontline workers will be able to access emergency child care. Our government has also listened to the voices of the special education community by directing school boards to provide in-person learning for those students who cannot learn remotely, ensuring they receive consistent and full supports. We also have strengthened mental health and special education funding for all school boards during the pandemic by \$42.5 million, including an additional \$10 million to support the needs of children who face adversity during the pandemic.

I thank all parents, students, child care and education workers for their collaboration and hard work, and continue to encourage Ontarians to follow health and safety guidance so that we can reduce community transmission and get all Ontario schools open and our kids back to class."

Region: Ontario^[3]

Tags: school system^[4]

school-age^[5]

COVID-19^[6]

Source URL (modified on 26 Jan 2021): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/01/safety-schools-remains-priority-number-one-ontario>
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