

# Memo

To: Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board School Community

From: Dr. Kieran Moore, Medical Officer of Health

Date: April 8, 2021

**Re: Statement from Medical Officer of Health Regarding Keeping Schools Open and Safe**

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Over the past year, our school community should be very proud of the work they have done to prevent, respond, and manage COVID-19 in the school environment. We appreciate how well families, students and staff have adhered to public health measures.

As spring break approaches, this pandemic continues to change how we gather, celebrate, and unwind. We understand that many families are tired of COVID-19 restrictions; however, COVID-19 cases are rising. These increases are being driven by COVID-19 variants, which are transmitted easily, can cause greater severity of disease, and are impacting younger individuals.

The Ontario government ordered a provincewide shutdown, effective April 3, 2021 and a stay-at-home order, effective April 8, 2021. Both Orders will stay in place for at least four weeks. These Orders are time-limited public health and workplace safety measures to help to stop the rapid transmission of COVID-19 variants in our communities, prevent further impact on our emergency medical services and hospital resources, and save lives.

We all understand how important education is to good physical and mental health and we want to keep schools open and safe for the remainder of the school year. This is a critical time. Now more than ever, we urge all residents to continue to practice public health measures.

- Stay at home.
- Stay local and avoid non-essential travel outside of the KFL&A region.
- Limit close contact to your household (the people you live with).
- Limit trips outside your home to necessities such as: getting food or medication, going to medical appointments, or enjoying exercise or walking pets.
- Avoid social gatherings, visiting others, or having others visit you and stay over night.
- If you have any symptoms of illness—stay home, isolate, and get tested early.
- Stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with, and wear a mask or face covering in indoor public spaces or any time physical distancing is not possible.

Given the increasing concerns of COVID-19 variants, and the risks of potential spread related to spring break, asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 before returning to school will be available for those who travel or had visitors outside of the KFL&A region.

We have come so far, and as we provide increasing immunity to our community through immunization, we must all continue to be vigilant and keep our school community safe.