



January 14, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor 438 University Ave  
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Lecce:

I am writing on behalf of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board of Trustees to express our disappointment and frustration with the recent change in provincial protocols regarding the management of COVID-19 in schools, and once again the total lack of consultation with school boards.

Our concerns are predicated on the following:

#### **Lack of Consultation Prior to Implementation**

Contrary to your comments on social media, there was absolutely no consultation with Trustee Associations, Directors of Education, or Unions for that matter on this significant change in practice.

#### **Lack of Transparency**

The discontinuation of the established COVID-19 case and contact management system, including public reporting of cases, dismissal of classes and cohorts, to be replaced by the 30% absence rate protocol, lacks the transparency of the system that has worked well and maintained public confidence throughout the pandemic and places our senior team, principals, and vice-principals in legal jeopardy.

#### **Broadband Inequities**

The Board of Trustees ask that the Province work with all stakeholders and broadband providers to address the inequities that exist across our Board's 16,000 square kilometre catchment area. Our families in rural areas suffer a major disadvantage when opting for remote learning.

#### **Access to Test Kits and N95 Masks**

We request PCR and Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits be made available to students and staff who have COVID-19 symptoms before they come into the school or workplace. In addition, that the Ministry of Education continues the funding and supply of RATs for all students and staff.

While we appreciate that school boards have received a supply of non-fit-tested N95 masks for staff, students have only been provided with 3-ply cloth masks that are for optional use. We request that the Province provide medical grade masks or child size N95 masks for all students.

### **Funding for Additional Staff to Facilitate Remote Learning**

The current funding model does not support additional staff to be hired as the demand for remote learning increases. Our Board has a threshold in this area and after that, families will be disadvantaged by being placed in an asynchronous learning environment.

### **The Immunization of School Pupils Act**

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board of Trustees request the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* include COVID-19 as a mandatory vaccination.

Our Board does its best to reach out to the various stakeholder groups impacted by decisions to inform policy, procedures, and practices. This was evidenced through the creation of our Multi-Year Strategic Plan. As such, we have the same expectation of our elected provincial government, which includes our Ministry of Education.

We ask in the strongest terms that you revert to the previous case and contact management system. This includes the transparent reporting of known positive COVID-19 cases in schools and sharing this information with families.

Our Board has many rural communities. If your expectation is to support families in remote learning for the long-term, adequate funding and infrastructure is required to address the inequities.

The health and safety, mental health and well-being of staff and students through the lens of our gospel values is our mandate. Please address our concerns in a manner that will help our stakeholders navigate this pandemic in a way that will minimize their trepidation for their welfare.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Algonquin and Lakeshore District School Board, thank you for your attention and consideration to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Tom Dall  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

c.c. Trustees  
Director of Education