

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Flr, 438 University Ave, Toronto, ON

Dear Minister Lecce,

May 20, 2021

RE: Return to School is an Essential Priority

We write to express our full and unequivocal support for the re-opening of schools as essential for children as community rates of COVID-19 decrease across the province. Upon careful review and consideration of local indicators, we believe it is possible, and in fact, imperative, that schools begin to open before the reopening of other sectors.

Evidence-based data on the importance and safety of school openings notes the harms of prolonged school closures and recommends that daily in-person classrooms should be the -“last to close and the first to open”-.

We believe with the current public health measures in place in schools, decreasing case counts and ever-increasing COVID-19 population vaccination rates (including school personnel) that it is time to re-open our schools. A return to in-person learning even for a short time before the summer break would provide multiple mental health and wellness benefits to students and their families.

Of course it is imperative to ensure that, as schools re-open, efforts are made to maintain low community case rates and that infection prevention control measures in schools continue.

In conclusion, we strongly recommend that reopening schools should be a priority, even before community restrictions are lifted. This would provide immeasurable benefits to the mental and physical well-being of all children and their families.

We would be pleased to discuss this with you or your ministry staff further.

Sincerely,



Ronald D. Cohn, M.D., FACMG
President & CEO,
The Hospital for Sick Children



Dr. Paul Roumeliotis MD.CM. MPH,FRCP(C)
Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health

CC: Dr. David Williams
Premier Doug Ford