

December 15, 2020

Premier Jason Kenney
Office of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Kenney:

Requesting four supports to mitigate COVID-19 transmission and increase public assurance

We agree with you and Dr. Hinshaw that we must work together to protect students, staff, and families and ensure we can keep schools open due to the vital role that they play, especially for the most vulnerable and youngest in our community. The measures put in place by your government on December 8 will help and we appreciate your government's decision to move grades 7 to 12 to at-home learning until January 11.

At our public Board meeting on December 8, we discussed further measures that could help mitigate COVID-19 transmission. Trustees unanimously agreed to request your government provide the following:

- Immediate access to the federal contact tracer app, "COVID Alert".
- Board flexibility to determine local transition to online learning for schools.
- Specific public metrics when to return to in-person learning, such as a zero-contact tracing backlog and a threshold of community transmission.
- Sharing of data on suspected incidents of in-school transmission with school divisions to inform and adapt safety measures.

Contract Tracing

Contact tracing was supposed to be the backbone of safe re-entry, but sadly, it has collapsed under the weight of the caseloads. School staff are undertaking the critical work of contract tracing—on top of an already long list of COVID-19-related extra duties—a practice that is not ideal. Active COVID-19 cases remain at a concerning level and in the majority of cases (75%+), the source of transmission remains unknown. Providing Albertans access to the functional COVID Alert app will be one more tool to help keep everyone safe and decrease the burden placed upon contact tracers.

Accessing the COVID Alert app is a zero dollar ask from the school board and would help us save staff time and costs. [It will cost Alberta nothing financially](#), and in our opinion there is no downside to making the federal app available immediately.

Flexibility

School divisions, working with AHS, currently have flexibility to respond to local COVID-19 circumstances and close a school if necessary. Our Division has a strong relationship with AHS and we appreciate their medical expertise and guidance during these challenging times. We are asking that this flexibility continue and be expanded to allow local school divisions, who know their staffing capacities, technology options and school communities, to respond to local circumstances and move between re-entry scenarios rather than waiting for multiple levels of decision making from external parties.

Metrics

Students, staff and families deserve clear, reliable metrics to inform their decisions around when it is safe to return to in-person learning. Metrics provided through zero-backlog contact tracing and a defined threshold of community transmission and/or in-school transmission at which classes would move between in-person and distance learning would help provide clarity and support safety.

Data

School divisions need to be able to adapt and respond using data to make decisions. School divisions require specific data about incidents of in-school transmission to adapt safety measures and improve practices within our schools to keep students and staff as safe as possible.

Our staff and students have been very diligent in following the protocols put in place by the Province and our Division, and we will continue to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19. We ask that you provide us with these four tools—the COVID Alert app, flexibility in scenario decisions, threshold metrics and in-school transmission data—to help us keep our schools and our province safer.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

c. Honourable Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education