

February 25, 2022

Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education
204 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister LaGrange,

Request for school-division-directed COVID-19 mitigation measures, rationale for the ending of masking in schools and monitoring of the impact of lifted mandates in schools

At our February 15 public Board meeting, Trustees shared the many concerns they heard from parents in response to school divisions being prohibited from having masking mandates for students.

The lack of collaboration with divisions, the absence of data to support the decision, and the warnings from immunologists that it is too early to end masking, including a warning from the Chief Medical Officer of Health that hospitals and the acute care system are still under strain all led families (and Trustees) to call into question the government's reasoning for the decisions to end masking in schools and prohibit school divisions from applying their own masking mandates.

We are not health authorities, but we do know our school communities. We know that the restrictions that have been in place have worked to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We also know that, as of February 21, we still had a provincial transmission positivity rate of 26 per cent and only 23.6 per cent of children under the age of 11 had two doses of vaccine. As you are aware, large urban divisions have much different contexts than small, rural communities. One size does not fit all when it comes to COVID-19 mitigation measures. Therefore, the Edmonton Public School Board requests three actions.

Our Board is asking you to allow school boards, working with Alberta Health Services, the autonomy to put measures and resources, such as masking, in place based on our local context.

We ask that the Chief Medical Officer of Health provide the data and rationale on which the decision to remove masking in schools was based.

Finally, we ask that the provincial government closely monitor the impact of lifting the mask mandate for all schools and publicly share data daily about in-school transmission rates of COVID-19, and movement of classes, grades, and schools to online learning.

These three actions will provide the transparency and assurance that families and school divisions are calling for and deserve.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

KM/mj

- c. Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Darrel Robertson, Superintendent, Edmonton Public Schools