

DATE: December 8, 2020

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Michael Janz

SUBJECT: Motion re: Request to Premier Kenney

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)

ISSUE

Notice of motion was served at the November 24, 2020, Board meeting.

BACKGROUND

Overall, 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. I acknowledge the difficulty of implementing wider community health measures, but these measures are critical in order to protect the ability of students to access education.

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. COVID cases are only climbing and in the majority of cases (75%+), the source of transmission remains unknown. Providing Albertans access to the functional COVID Alert app may be one more tool to help keep everyone safe and avoid a lockdown. [The app lets people report a COVID diagnosis in eight provinces and, if it's downloaded on your phone, also notifies you of possible exposure.](#)

I've been hearing from students, staff and families about the anxiety around delays in a notification, and the workload burdens for staff in terms of contact tracing are a significant source of added stress. The COVID Alert app could help reduce stress and strain, not only on our schools but our health care system in general. There have been major functionality and accuracy concerns ([as recently as November 15th, 2020](#)) with the Alberta-created app, that do not exist with the COVID Alert app.

Accessing the COVID Alert app is a zero dollar ask from the school board and would help us save staff time and costs. Even for those who don't believe that an app will benefit us, [it will cost Alberta nothing financially](#), and there is no downside to making the federal app available immediately. I have heard in many cases it was days until schools were notified by AHS and principals have to spend staff time making phone calls to all of the affected families. This is a significant additional workload in addition to supporting the teaching and learning in our schools during a very stressful pandemic.

Flexibility

Local autonomy and board flexibility would allow local school systems to make rapid decisions about changing between re-entry scenarios to keep students, staff, and family safer rather than waiting for multiple levels of decision making from the provincial government. Given the difficulties with contact tracing, we need all of the tools we can to respond.

Metrics

Students, staff and families deserve clear and transparent 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 from in-person to distance learning would help provide clarity and support safety.

Data

Schools need to be able to adapt and respond using data to make decisions. The fact that data around suspected incidents of in-school transmission is not being shared with school divisions to inform and adapt safety measures is alarming. Moreover, it is perplexing why this information is being kept from the front-line workers best able to adapt and respond to the pandemic. Lacking full transparency on these cases, it is hard for us to take further proactive measures to respond.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to assist with contact tracing, reduce in-school transmission, keep schools open, and avoid another lockdown, the Board of Trustees write a letter to Premier Kenney requesting:

- **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.**

OPTIONS

1. Approve the recommendation.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendation for approval.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval of the recommendation the Board Chair would send these requests on behalf of all Trustees to Premier Kenney.

MJ:km