

The Metro School Boards Group



Calgary Board
of Education



CALGARY CATHOLIC
SCHOOL DISTRICT



EDMONTON
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 15, 2021

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

Dear Minister LaGrange,

Thank you for the meeting with the metro board Chairs and Superintendents on September 27. We appreciated the opportunity to provide a picture of how COVID continues to impact our students, staff and school divisions.

We are pleased that positive cases of COVID are now being shared with school divisions, but remain concerned that contact notification is the responsibility of school staff. Staff in our schools are working incredibly hard to keep their colleagues and all students as safe as possible during COVID in addition to providing quality teaching amidst challenging conditions. Asking them to take on the extra responsibility of doing the work that AHS should be doing is not acceptable. We ask that you work with AHS to have staff in place as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we ask that you provide school divisions with funding to put staff in place to coordinate the significant communication and support required for contact tracing and the notification of close contacts.

During our discussion on September 27 we asked you to reinstate contact tracing done by AHS, have AHS share data of positive cases with our divisions and reinstate mandatory isolation of close contacts in our schools (i.e., quarantine cohorts.) These measures are what is needed immediately to keep students and staff safe and to avoid a total shutdown of schools. While we see some movement on these requests, we remain concerned about the number of cases in our schools, the increase in cases of COVID in children aged 5 to 11 and the increase in hospitalizations for children.

The provincial government announcement on providing rapid testing kits to K-6 schools experiencing an “outbreak,” while a step in the right direction, could be further expanded to have a real impact on families in our school divisions. We would like you to consider providing rapid testing kits free of charge to any family who requests one. This would be both a proactive step to mitigate COVID spread in schools and the community, and to alleviate anxiety for families. Our school divisions look forward to further details on the rapid test kit program and we hope that you will take our recommendations under consideration.

As we shared in our meeting, we want to collaborate with you on solutions to ensure students and staff are as safe as possible in our schools and receive the support required as we all continue to navigate this global pandemic. Please reach out to us when considering changes that affect the students and families we serve. With our Superintendents, we are in a position to keep you apprised of how COVID is affecting our students and families and would like to continue to find ways to work together.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Dennis
Chair, Board of Trustees
Calgary Board of Education



Mary Martin
Chair, Board of Trustees
Calgary Catholic School District



Sandra Palazzo
Chair, Board of Trustees
Edmonton Catholic Schools



Trisha Estabrooks
Chair, Board of Trustees
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KM/mj

- c. Honourable Jason Copping, Minister of Health
Lorrie Jess, President, Alberta School Boards Association

