

March 17, 2022

Premier Doug Ford
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Via Email: premier@ontario.ca

Minister of Health Christine Elliott
Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
777 Bay Street, Floor 5, Toronto, ON M57A 2J3

Via Email: Christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Minister of Education Stephen Lecce
Ministry of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave. Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Via Email: Minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ministry of Health
777 Bay Street, Floor 5, Toronto, ON M5G 2C8

Via email: cmoh@ontario.ca

Dr. Piotr Oglaza, Medical Officer of Health
KFL&A Public Health
221 Portsmouth Ave., Kingston, ON K7M 1V5

Via email: Piotr.Oglaza@kflaph.ca

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Elliott, Minister Lecce, Dr. Moore and Dr. Oglaza:

This letter is a response to the CMOH statements of March 9, 2022 and the Ministry of Education memorandum of March 9, 2022 lifting public health measures in publicly funded K-12 schools in Ontario. In a Special Board Meeting held on March 16, 2022, Limestone District School Board Trustees unanimously approved a motion requesting a two-week extension of the masking requirements for Grades 1-12.

Limestone Trustees fully recognize that as the pandemic evolves, public health measures need to adjust. However, we are gravely concerned about the timing of the lifting of masks as students and staff return to schools after the March Break. It should be noted that these concerns echo those expressed by the Children's Health Coalition that includes CHEO and Sick Kids. Extending the masking requirement for two-weeks would add a layer of protection that would mitigate the impact of COVID incubation time and align with the two-week masking requirement for anyone who has traveled internationally.

While the provincial directives from March 9 have been received differently by families, a significant number of families feel abandoned by the removal of public health measures. With the removal of masking requirements, Limestone Trustees request additional direction and communication regarding how schools can protect students



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Suzanne Ruttan (Chair) | Krishna Burra (Director of Education and Secretary) | Craig Young (Treasurer)

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and staff who are immunocompromised or who have complex medical needs, and students who are under age 5 and are currently unable to be vaccinated.

In addition, Limestone Trustees are very concerned about the misalignment of masking requirements being maintained on public transportation, but not on school buses. If the close confines of public transportation are a high-risk context, why are school buses deemed differently? It does not stand to reason that students riding a city bus to school would have to mask, while students on school buses can unmask.

Furthermore, extending masking requirements from March 21 to April 4 would also allow a greater number of students 5-11 years old to be fully vaccinated, and a greater number of 12-17 year old students to receive a booster shot.

Limestone Trustees request your urgent consideration of these requests, and a prompt response to our concerns. Granting our request for a two-week extension to masking requirements would provide an additional layer of safety, and help protect the health of students, staff, and families served by Limestone DSB, and across Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Ruttan", written in a cursive style.

Suzanne Ruttan,
Chair, Limestone District School Board

c.c. Krishna Burra, LDSB Director of Education
Cathy Abraham, President of OPSBA

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