

STATEMENT

Ontario Delays March Break in an Effort to Reduce Community Transmission of COVID-19

Decision was made on the advice of public health officials

February 11, 2021

[Education](#)

TORONTO - Today, Stephen Lecce, Ontario's Minister of Education, issued the following statement regarding March break:

"In support of our collective efforts to keep schools safe, we are postponing March break until April 12-16, 2021. This decision was made with the best advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and public health officials, including consultations with many local Medical Officers of Health.

Many students have been learning remotely since the start of 2021. It is critical we follow public health advice to protect schools and avoid a repeat of the concerning spike in youth-related cases over the winter break, when students and staff were out of schools for a prolonged period of time. We are taking this precaution based on advice from health experts, including the province's Science Table and the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to help protect against the emerging COVID-19 variants of concern.

We appreciate the hard work of students and staff in the education sector and I want to be clear: March break is being postponed, not cancelled. To keep schools open, we must keep them free of COVID-19. The actions announced today serve to limit opportunities for congregation - while reaffirming the evidence that schools are safe for students. By continuing to follow public health advice, and by introducing additional safety measures and more testing, we are supporting our collective efforts to keep COVID-19 from entering our schools.

With respect to travel, our government's position on this is unchanged. Ontarians should refrain from travelling, particularly given the increase in new variants that pose a direct risk to our country. Please stay at home as much as possible and continue following the direction of public health officials so that we can keep schools open and protect our seniors, frontline health workers and all families.

These decisions - based on the advice of medical experts - are never easy, but they are necessary to keep Ontario families safe."

BACKGROUND

On February 2, 2021, the Ministry consulted with trustees' associations, teacher federations, education worker unions, and principal and vice-principal associations to get their valuable perspectives. Additional feedback was provided from stakeholders via written submissions.

On [February 3, 2021](#), Ontario announced the return dates for in-person learning for all remaining Public Health Units (PHUs). As of February 16, 2021, all students across Ontario will be able to learn in-person.

To support the safe return of in-person learning, Ontario has enhanced new measures to continue to protect students and staff against COVID-19 in the classroom. These measures include:

- Increased provincewide access to targeted asymptomatic testing for students and staff;
- Mandatory masking requirement for students in Grades 1-3, and masking requirement for Grades 1-12 outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- Providing 3.5 million high quality masks to schools as back-up supply for Grade 1-12 students;
- Guidance discouraging students and staff from congregating before and after school; and
- Temporary certification of eligible teacher candidates who are set to graduate in 2021 to stabilize staffing levels.

These new measures build on the more than \$1.6 billion that Ontario has provided in additional resources to protect schools against the spread of COVID-19.

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