



The Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
College Park, 5th floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

August 20, 2020

Dear Minister Elliott,

In less than 3 weeks, more than two million of Ontario's children are to return to the classroom. Given that this will be the first-time students are back in school since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, parents, teachers, principals, school boards, public health officials and supporting healthcare facilities want to have confidence in the province's policies and protocols to prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks in a school community.

In addition to frequent handwashing, wearing a mask and staying home when sick, health officials and infection disease specialists agree that ongoing, wide-spread testing and rapid contact tracing are essential for the safe reopening of schools and managing the spread of COVID-19.

Local public health units, particularly Ottawa Public Health (OPH) in our region, will bear all of the increased demand and will need the appropriate investments and supports so that COVID-19 outbreaks in our school communities don't go unmanaged.

Therefore, in order for all involved to have confidence in the safe return to school, will you please address the following concerns:

1. How does the Ministry of Health plan to support the expansion of testing capacity in the Ottawa region from the current 1500 to 2000 COVID-19 tests completed per day to the goal of between 5000-7000 daily tests?
2. How is the Ministry addressing the human resources requirements, particularly the demand for qualified lab technicians, that will be needed to process and analyze the increase in testing capacity?

3. Current funding has allowed for 1 additional public health nurse to be deployed to assist with infection control and COVID-19 communications for every 8 schools in the province. How can families be assured that this will be enough to support schools that will likely have concurrent outbreaks happening at the same time?
4. Given that there are no current restrictions on getting a COVID-19 test, will there be a province-wide order to prioritize children and their families, if they have been exposed in the event of a case at a school?

Given the limited time before the start of the school year, we look forward to your expediated response.

Sincerely,



John Fraser
MPP, Ottawa South



Stephen Blais
MPP, Orléans



Lucille Collard
MPP, Ottawa-Vanier



Amanda Simard
MPP, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell