



# **Hastings Prince Edward Public Health Board of Health Meeting**

Information Items

Wednesday, June 2, 2021

**Listing of Information Items  
Board of Health Meeting – June 2, 2021**

1. Peterborough Public Health – Letter to Premier Doug Ford re priorities for provincial leadership dated May 14, 2021
2. COMO and Sick Kids – Letter to Minister Stephen Lecce re Return to School dated May 20, 2021

*The above information items can be found on the Hastings Prince Edward Public Health's website through the link in the Agenda Package or by going to our website at [hpePublicHealth.ca](http://hpePublicHealth.ca).*

May 14, 2021

Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
[premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

Dear Premier Ford,

On behalf of the Peterborough board of health, I would like to share our appreciation and support for your decision to extend the current Stay-at-Home Order that was set to expire on May 19 until at least June 2, 2021. Your announcement yesterday has come as good news for our communities in Peterborough, where we have seen a much slower decline in the incidence of daily COVID-19 cases than with previous provincial lock downs.

Although we understand the sacrifices that are required by our local operators and businesses, it is critical that when we do emerge from this period, we are able to sustain any gains made. We continue to make great progress with our vaccination roll-out but we will not have achieved the critical mass of fully immunized individuals by June 2<sup>nd</sup> and we must rely on a continuation of public health measures to prevent a resurgence.

With this in mind, we would like to propose three priorities for provincial leadership in order to prepare for June 2nd and a successful transition to recovery over the summer months:

First, we request that the province articulate the parameters that need to be achieved in order for the order to be lifted or modified. This includes clearly specifying goals such as daily new cases, transmission rates, test positivity rate, hospitalization and ICU capacity that will indicate when it is safe to ease the current restrictions. Sticking to the health measures will be much easier if we have specific goals to work towards.

Second, we urge that lower-risk outdoor activities be permitted. Communities are exhausted and the science supports the outdoors as a safer setting for physical activities such as play and recreation. Surely we can allow sports, exercise, and similar activities that can be done in small numbers, allow for physical distancing and other public health measures like the wearing of masks where necessary. For many of these spaces, the missing ingredient is the required supervision to ensure appropriate use. This may be a target for enhanced provincial funding to allow municipalities to step in to fill this gap.

Third, we believe that part of the encouragement for people to get vaccinated is the provision of the rationale. In other words, the descriptions of what additional activities can or loosened restrictions fully vaccinated individuals can expect. Now is the time to provide guidelines of what a fully vaccinated person can do with another fully vaccinated person – whether that may be to hug, eat together, share a visit with a parent in long-term care. We encourage the Premier to accept the invitation from ALPHA, our provincial association of boards of health, for further input and advice on how best to ensure the success of Ontario's COVID-19 response as we move into the summer months.

The battle against COVID 19 and the management of the pandemic has highlighted the value of the partnership between public health and the government in protecting the health of Ontarians. As we move forward together to finish the job and as we consider the ongoing role of Public Health in a post-pandemic environment, we look forward to continuing the close collaboration with the government and other health care partners.

Once again, thank you, Premier, for taking action and communicating it clearly with us in a timely way.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by***

Mayor Andy Mitchell  
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health  
Dave Smith, MPP Peterborough-Kawartha  
David Piccini, MPP Northumberland-Peterborough South  
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock  
Curve Lake First Nation Council  
Hiawatha First Nation Council  
Peterborough City Council  
Peterborough County Council  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Boards of Health

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5th Flr, 438 University Ave, Toronto, ON

Dear Minister Lecce,

May 20, 2021

**RE: Return to School is an Essential Priority**

We write to express our full and unequivocal support for the re-opening of schools as essential for children as community rates of COVID-19 decrease across the province. Upon careful review and consideration of local indicators, we believe it is possible, and in fact, imperative, that schools begin to open before the reopening of other sectors.

Evidence-based data on the importance and safety of school openings notes the harms of prolonged school closures and recommends that daily in-person classrooms should be the -“last to close and the first to open”-.

We believe with the current public health measures in place in schools, decreasing case counts and ever-increasing COVID-19 population vaccination rates (including school personnel) that it is time to re-open our schools. A return to in-person learning even for a short time before the summer break would provide multiple mental health and wellness benefits to students and their families.

Of course it is imperative to ensure that, as schools re-open, efforts are made to maintain low community case rates and that infection prevention control measures in schools continue.

In conclusion, we strongly recommend that reopening schools should be a priority, even before community restrictions are lifted. This would provide immeasurable benefits to the mental and physical well-being of all children and their families.

We would be pleased to discuss this with you or your ministry staff further.

Sincerely,



Ronald D. Cohn, M.D., FACMG  
President & CEO,  
The Hospital for Sick Children



Dr. Paul Roumeliotis MD.CM. MPH,FRCP(C)  
Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health

CC: Dr. David Williams  
Premier Doug Ford