

June 9, 2021

To All Members of the School Communities in the Hastings Prince Edward, and Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Counties.

A Joint Statement from Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) and Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Public Health (KFL&A PH) regarding the upcoming school graduations and best wishes for students across the region.

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As the school year draws to a close, we recognize that many students, families, and educators are looking forward to celebrating academic milestones and graduations. On Wednesday, June 2, 2021, the Premier's Office announced a decision to continue with remote learning for all elementary and secondary students across the province for the remainder of this school year. On Monday, June 7, guidance was provided to school boards for end of school year celebrations. These announcements will help guide end of school year planning for local school communities.

Graduation marks a special milestone in a student's educational journey, and it is understandable that students and families might be eager to get together to mark the completion of a difficult and unusual school year. We also understand that schools in Hastings Prince Edward, and Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Counties have invested significant time and effort in planning graduation ceremonies that meet provincial guidance, and adhere to public health measures within their capacity. Planning undertaken to date has aligned with the Ontario Regulations in place at the time and with consideration to important public health measures.

In our regions with continued roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine and low local rates of COVID-19 in our communities, there is much to be optimistic for in the future. As we approach the end of the school year, the teams at HPEPH and KFL&A PH recognize the tireless efforts made by all members of the school community to respond and adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and keep students safe.

However, despite current low COVID-19 rates in our regions, we must remain vigilant until the majority of the population has two doses of vaccine. Virtual or drive through ceremonies remain the lowest risk options to celebrate academic success and achievement of students. If outdoor celebrations are within the school board capacity, we encourage following the precautions laid out in the Ministry of Education guidance on graduations and Step One of Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen. We recognize there is limited time before the end of the school year and any gatherings must be planned thoroughly. Ontario will enter Step One of Ontario's

Roadmap to Reopen on June 11 at 12:01 a.m. and remain in Step One for a minimum of 21 days. While outdoor ceremonies are permitted in Step One, physical distancing must be maintained at all times, and gatherings before or after the ceremony on school property are not permitted. HPEPH and KFL&A PH support the judgement of administrators and school boards to determine the appropriate format for end of year celebrations that are feasible and in alignment with provincial guidance.

As the current school year draws to a close, we wish to express our continued thanks for your commitment to the health and well-being of school communities in Hastings Prince Edward and Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington and we look forward to continued collaboration as we work towards a safe reopening in September.

Together, we can keep our students and our community safe.

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