

## STATEMENT

# Keeping Students and Staff Safe as They Return to School

September 7, 2020

[Education](#)

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Toronto — Today, the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education issued the following statement on students returning to school over the coming days.

"While COVID-19 has forced upon us many changes to our schools and our lives, some things remain constant. The importance of quality education, our collective mental health, and the safety of our students and staff.

This year is like no other in our past. I am fiercely proud of our province, and our collective efforts. We will overcome any challenge on the horizon, so long as we continue to work together in the interests of our students and aggressively work to stop the spread in our communities.

If your first day of school is in-class or online, I want you to know we are behind you every step of the way. Ensuring your schools are safe and thoroughly cleaned, educators trained, supported by the doubling of public health nurses in schools, masking, and cohorting. All designed to keep you safe.

Mental health is important to me. It's personal. I have seen the struggles of many friends and family. I want students to know they are not alone. You are loved and supported. And if you want to talk or seek support, we have nearly doubled mental health funding to boards to ensure you have access to the supports you need when you need them, including [Kids Help Phone](#), a service available 24 hours a day if students want someone to talk to.

While we remain focused on priority number one - safety - I want to emphasize the importance of quality learning. It is why we introduced a new elementary math curriculum, it is why we continue to strive to be a leader in science, technology, engineering, and math or STEM, and it is why we continue to make the case for merit-based hiring so the best educators are in front of your child's class. This matters now more than ever.

We will do this, together. Stay positive, kind, and optimistic, and know that by working together, we will overcome any challenge with strength and unity."

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