

# Ontario Providing Additional Funding to Enhance Safety and Protection in Schools

Initiatives Include Voluntary Testing and Additional Online Learning Supports

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[Office of the Premier](#)

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MISSISSAUGA — The Ontario government is providing \$13.6 million to enable school boards to hire more teachers and staff in regions recently moved to the Red-Control level and providing stabilization funding for school boards, if needed. The province is also expanding testing in school communities and launching new online learning portals. These initiatives will enhance safety measures for schools and alleviate potential budget shortfalls during COVID-19.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford and Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education.

"Ensuring the safety of students, teachers and staff is our government's top priority. That's why we developed the most robust and comprehensive plan in the country to safely reopen schools," said Premier Ford. "This plan is now giving us the flexibility to expand voluntary testing and provide additional funding to support all of our school boards in priority communities."

Ontario is launching targeted [voluntary testing](#) of asymptomatic students and staff in regions of the province which currently have a high number of active COVID-19 cases. The Ministry of Education, along with the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health, are working with participating school boards and local public health units to support implementation. This initiative will make it easier to track and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools. It may also inform public health decisions and help to manage outbreaks.

This new effort will be complemented by funding for school safety in high priority regions, with Ontario allocating \$13.6 million for school boards in Durham, Halton, Hamilton and Waterloo Region in response to the increase in COVID-19 cases in these communities. This funding is part of the government's comprehensive [\\$1.3 billion plan](#) to safely reopen classrooms across the province, including additional resources to help school boards hire more staff, keep class sizes low, and enhance cleaning in schools.

This \$13.6 million will further enhance safety by: promoting physical distancing with the hiring of more teachers and staff; increasing remote learning supports; and improving cleanliness with the hiring of additional custodians. This funding builds on the \$35 million in extra supports provided for schools in Toronto, Peel, York, and Ottawa regions back in October.

For school boards across the province, the government is also providing funding stabilization to help alleviate some of the impacts of unexpected enrolment declines as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding stabilization responds to potential school board budget shortfalls and will help provide flexibility for school boards to address a range of unanticipated funding issues. Without this funding stabilization, school boards could face staffing reductions, increased class sizes and cuts to programs and student supports.

"We are building upon our plan to protect students, staff, and families by expanding funding, testing, and training, along with interactive learning supports, to keep our schools open and safe," said Minister Lecce. "Expanding targeted testing will introduce a critical layer of prevention for schools in regions of the province that currently have a high number of active COVID-19 cases that will help ensure we continue to deliver safe and open schools for our kids."

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide high quality remote learning resources, the government is also announcing the launch of two new learning portals developed in partnership with TVO and TFO. [TVO Learn](#) and TFO's [IDÉLLO, apprendre à la maison](#) will support students who are self-screening, quarantining at home, or wishing to build their skills by accessing additional educational resources developed by Ontario certified teachers. These portals provide engaging and interactive ways to support children and further their learning from home in the Grades 1 to 8 Ontario curriculum. These resources can be used on their own, or to support learning activities provided by classroom teachers. New resources and additional subjects will be added throughout the school year.

The Ministry of Education is also developing a health and safety refresher for students for their first day of class in January 2021. The refresher will include a focus on COVID-19 safety protocols, including hand hygiene and proper masking. The refresher will also discuss the importance of mental health and tips to support mental health and wellness.

Earlier this summer, Ontario unveiled one of the nation's most [comprehensive plans for the safe reopening of schools in September](#). The plan provides resources to hire more teachers and increase physical distancing, supports the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE), enhanced cleaning of schools and buses, improving air quality, hiring of more

custodians, and adding school leadership positions and administrative support for virtual schools. The province is also providing funding to public health units to support the hiring of 625 school-focused nurses, while establishing a mandatory masking policy for Grades 4 to 12.

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## Quick Facts

- The \$13.6 million allocation to support high priority regions is part of the \$50 million Future Pandemic Response Fund that was set aside to address future pandemic education needs. This funding was part of \$381 million federal investment [announced in August 2020](#). Of this \$50 million, the government has allocated [\\$35 million to schools boards in priority regions](#) of Peel, Toronto, Ottawa and York.
  - With the remainder of the Future Pandemic Response Fund, the Ministry of Education will also be introducing a one-time investment of \$1.4 million to the Education and Community Partnership Program (ECP) to fund technology and technology-related costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic to support continued student learning.
  - The Ontario government has made available a total of \$1.3 billion in critical supports to ensure the safe reopening of our schools. This support is in addition to the landmark annual investment of over \$25.5 billion in education, which represents an increase of \$736 million for the 2020-21 school year compared to 2019-2020.
  - The Ministry of Education provides operating funding to Ontario's 72 district school boards through the annual Grants for Student Needs (GSN) education funding model. Funding to school boards is provided on a combination of per-student, per-school, and per-board basis.
  - [Earlier this year, Ontario announced its investment of \\$736 million more in public education for the 2020-21 school year](#), increasing the GSN total to more than \$25.5 billion.
  - [TVO Learn](#) and [TFO's IDELLO's apprendre à la maison](#) portals will feature interactive videos that promote well-being, mental health and physical activity.
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## Additional Resources

- [Ontario Dedicates \\$13.6 Million for Durham, Halton, Hamilton and Waterloo Communities](#)
  - [Targeted Testing for School Communities](#)
  - [COVID-19: Reopening Schools](#)
  - [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#)
  - [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) document.
  - Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
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