

# Ontario Unveils \$2 Billion Plan to Keep Schools Safe and Support Learning Recovery and Renewal

Record-level Support for Mental Health and Learning Recovery Included as Part of a Historic Investment in 2021-22 School Year

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[Education](#)

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TORONTO — The Ontario government is providing more than \$2 billion in new supports to advance and protect public education for the 2021-22 school year. The support includes more than \$1.6 billion in resources to respond to COVID-19 and an \$85.5 million commitment to support learning recovery and renewal in response to the ongoing pandemic.

It also includes a \$561 million increase to this year's [Grants for Student Needs](#), bringing the 2021-22 total GSN investment to \$25.6 billion.

"Our government is investing more in public education than any government in Ontario history," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "As we continue to work with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to evaluate the safe resumption of in-class learning, our number-one priority remains safety in the classroom. To deliver on that priority, our government is making more than \$1.6 billion available to protect school safety while investing in the long-term success of students with more support for reading, math, mental health, and special education needs."

While there is important progress being made in the delivery of vaccines, the health and safety of students and staff remains a top priority. In advance of the new school year, the Ontario government is providing a total of more than \$1.6 billion in resources to protect schools against COVID-19. Highlights include:

- \$59 million in continued special education, mental health, well-being and equity supports, the highest ever investment (including an annual \$10 million investment as part of the GSN);
- \$35 million in additional technology funding (including an annual \$15 million to support technology such as devices for students in the GSN and \$20 million in connectivity supports for remote learning technology);
- \$20 million in new funding to support learning recovery and renewal;
- \$29 million for increased costs related to school operations;
- \$66 million for enhanced cleaning protocols and other health and safety measures in student transportation;
- \$86 million for school-focused nurses in public health units and testing;
- \$384 million in temporary COVID-19 staffing supports;
- Up to \$450 million in personal protective equipment (PPE) and critical supplies and equipment, e.g. cleaning supplies provided through the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and the pandemic stockpile; and
- Up to \$508 million for school boards to access up to 2 per cent of reserves to support COVID-related expenses.

The Ontario government is [supporting learning recovery and renewal](#) by investing an additional \$85.5 million to help students across the province address the effects of learning disruptions as a result of COVID-19. Investments will support reading and math for young learners, student re-engagement, and mental health and well-being supports. These learning recovery and renewal measures will include partnering with [School Mental Health Ontario](#) to support educators and enable timely interventions; additional teaching resources including math leads and coaches; and summer learning and special education supports, among other initiatives. These steps will position Ontario as a leading jurisdiction in unveiling a suite of learning recovery initiatives in advance of the next school year.

With an increase in funding of \$561 million, \$25.6 billion is projected to be provided for the success and well-being of the province's next generation through the GSN. This historic level of support reflects the third straight year it has increased under the current government, and on a per-student basis is estimated to rise to \$12,686, the highest amount ever.

Complementary to the GSN, Ontario's Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) enables school boards and third parties to undertake important curricular and extra-curricular initiatives that promote student success, development and leadership skills. For the upcoming school year, the PPF will include over \$288 million to fund approximately 150 initiatives that include a focus on strengthening math skills, access to mental health supports, anti-racism and support for children with disabilities.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has made unprecedented investments to support student mental health, including over \$80 million projected in 2021-22, which is more than four times the investments made in 2017-18. For the 2021-22 school year, Ontario will also be providing school boards with \$3.2 billion to support students with special education needs through the GSN – the highest investment recorded in Ontario.

“All students deserve the opportunity to succeed. By continuing to fund vital projects like ours that bring evidence-based resources to every classroom, the provincial government is stepping up to provide better support and learning opportunities for students with disabilities,” said Lawrence Barns, President and CEO of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. “By resourcing educators to better meet the needs of all students, Ontario is advancing more accessible, caring, inclusive learning in our education system – especially critical as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“We are grateful to the government and to the Ministry of Education for continuing to provide critical funds to support the mental health of youth in Ontario – this is vitally important to students,” said Katherine Hay, President and CEO of Kids Help Phone. “Since the beginning of the pandemic we have had 1.2 million connections with youth in Ontario – more than double the previous year. The government’s funding enables us to provide access to more supports for more young people in their time of need – no issue is too big or too small.”

“We are committed to providing schools with the resources they need for a safe and successful 2021-22 school year, because we know all families in Ontario expect their children to be safe in the classroom. This includes a continued emphasis on increased supports for student mental health and other health and safety priorities,” said Robin Martin, MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence.

“Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health has said that schools have been safe, and with this record investment and continued implementation of the best medical advice, we will keep schools safe as we look ahead to September,” said Minister Lecce. “Our investments can help hire more than 1,000 mental health workers and allow children to have direct access to teacher-led math tutoring.”

The Ministry of Education will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health, in addition to consultations with The Hospital for Sick Children and other pediatric institutes, to confirm this summer the final health and safety strategies required for the upcoming school year. This will include updated guidance on requirements such as masking, hand hygiene and screening, as well as other public health protocols to ensure schools remain safe. The intention is to deliver a learning experience as safe and normal as possible, including planning for physical education and extracurriculars.

Healthy people are essential for a healthy economy. With vaccines being distributed, hope is on the horizon. Ontario’s [Action Plan: Protecting People’s Health and Our Economy](#) provides the resources necessary to support the battle against COVID-19, building on the government’s record investments to protect health and jobs during the global pandemic.

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## Quick Facts

- COVID-19 resources will provide school boards with \$1.6 billion for a wide range of supports, such as additional staffing to support remote learning and social distancing through smaller class sizes and support for remote learning technology, including improvements to connectivity within school buildings.
  - School boards have been instructed to not require parental decision on in-person or remote learning before June 1, 2021, at the earliest.
  - Resources will also be available to support health and safety measures, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for school boards; enhanced cleaning protocols of schools and school busses; and additional staffing to support cleaning.
  - The 2021-22 COVID-19 supports do not include any federal government investments.
  - The Ministry of Education provides operating funding to Ontario’s 72 district school boards and 10 school authorities through the annual GSN education funding model. Funding to school boards is provided on a combination of per-student, per-school, and per-board basis.
  - In addition to Ontario’s annual investment of approximately \$1.4 billion to support the repair and renewal of schools and \$550 million for new schools, additions and major renovations, school boards will have access to \$656 million in combined federal-provincial funding. This funding is being provided to school boards under the [COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program](#).
  - The government also allocated \$100 million to school boards during the 2020-21 school year to support immediate measures to optimize air quality and ventilation in schools, which helped ensure over 95 per cent of school boards reported improvements this school year.
  - Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Ontario government has stepped up to provide Ontario families with \$1.8 billion in direct financial support. The latest round is \$980 million in direct support as part of the [Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit](#), where payments will be doubled to \$400 per child and \$500 for a child with special needs to help offset additional learning costs. Applications are now being accepted until May 17, 2021.
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## Additional Resources

- [Historic Level of Public Education Funding With Additional Supports to Keep Students and Staff Safe](#)
  - [Ontario’s Learning Recovery and Renewal Plan for Students](#)
  - [Education Funding, 2021-22](#)
  - [2021 Budget - Ontario’s Action Plan: Protecting People’s Health and Our Economy](#)
  - [Learn at Home, TVO Learn, IDELLO](#)
  - [Learn About how the Government is Supporting People, Businesses and Families during COVID-19](#)
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