



Bluewater District School Board

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Sent by email: stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org

January 25, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
315 Front Street West, 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 0B8

Dear Minister Lecce:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are reaching out regarding the provision of provincially fully funded non-fit-tested N95 masks for students to ensure enhanced safety in our schools.

In Bluewater District School Board, the vast majority of students are only partially vaccinated, or not yet eligible for vaccination.

A tight-fitting mask has been identified by public health officials as one of the top lines of protection against COVID-19. The Public Health Agency of Canada has stated for both children and adults that while non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, non-fit-tested N95 masks provide better protection.

We applaud the Ministry of Education for providing medical masks to Ontario's education staff free of charge under workplace health and safety requirements, and for recently recognizing the need to continue masking in schools by provisioning non-fit-tested N95 masks free of charge to all education staff. However, the same workplace health and safety protections offered to education staff also need to be extended to students who are required by law to attend school.

Masking needs to be considered through an equity lens as affordability and availability of pediatric and adult medical masks are significant barriers for many families. Further, many families who cannot afford enhanced masking also do not have the financial privilege of choosing online learning.

We are requesting that non-fit-tested N95 masks be fully funded and provided by the ministry to every student in the province in the same way that these masks are now being fully funded and provided to education staff.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter as we work together to protect the health and safety of our students and staff.

As always, our commitment remains focused on providing a quality education for every student in a safe, accepting, and caring environment.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jane Thomson in black ink.

Jane Thomson
Chair

Handwritten signature of Jan Johnstone in black ink.

Jan Johnstone
Vice-Chair

cc: The Honourable Bill Walker, MPP, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound
The Honourable Lisa Thompson, MPP, Huron-Bruce
The Honourable Marit Stiles, NDP Education Critic
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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