

## THE LINDSAY ADVOCATE

KAWARTHA LAKES' FINEST MAGAZINE

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## New COVID-19 funding for HKLB school boards

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In an effort to keep schools safe from COVID-19, the Ontario government is investing an additional \$381 million provided by the federal Safe Return to Class Fund. This funding will be used to improve air quality and ventilation in schools, support online learning, promote student mental health and hire more staff.

The Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) will receive a total allocation of \$600,787. An amount of \$532,000 of this funding will be dedicated to improving air quality and ventilation, \$15,446 will be dedicated to health and safety, and \$73,882 will be dedicated to student transportation.

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A recent media release from Laurie Scott, MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, says that other school boards that serve students in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock are also receiving new funding although no further details were provided.

“Having students return to in-person learning is essential to the wellbeing, development and mental health of children,” says Scott. “That’s why we are strengthening health and safety measures and providing additional funding to help students remain in the classroom.”

As more students return to in-person learning, Ontario is introducing additional measures which aim to protect students and staff, including:

- Provincewide access to targeted asymptomatic testing for students and staff, using a combination of lab-processed PCR and rapid antigen tests;
- Mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3, including outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- Enhanced screening of secondary students and staff;
- New guidance discouraging students from congregating before and after; and
- Temporary certification of eligible teacher candidates who are set to graduate in 2021 to stabilize staffing levels, following high levels of absenteeism.

“To protect Ontario students and staff, and with the aim of reopening all schools, we have again strengthened our plan with tougher measures and new investments,” says Education Minister Stephen Lecce.

“We agree with parents and medical experts that kids need to be learning in class – alongside their friends and teachers – as it is crucial for their mental well-being and development. We will continue to follow expert medical advice and work to get all schools open, for children in all regions of our province.”

Ontario’s chief medical officer of health and leading medical and scientific experts, including the Hospital for Sick Children, support the safe return to in-person learning for students and staff.

Expanding access to targeted asymptomatic testing will be a valuable tool for local public health units and schools. To support the expansion of targeted asymptomatic testing, the Ministry of Education has procured test collection capacity for up to 50,000 tests per week, to be deployed at the discretion of local public health units in collaboration with schools.

To address labour needs and high rates of staff absenteeism, the Ministry of Education has worked with the Ontario College of Teachers to introduce a new temporary certificate to help stabilize staffing levels in schools. This will allow school boards to employ eligible teacher candidates when there are no occasional teachers available from their current lists. With this important change, we are helping schools with operational challenges to remain open. This decision underscores the shortage of available certified teachers in the province, following the hiring of over 3,400 net new temporary teaching positions.

For more information on the the provinces efforts to protect Ontarians from COVID-19 [click here](#).