



Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
Room 124, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V1V 1X4

August 18, 2020

Dear Minister Fleming,

It is clear based on the feedback from thousands of students, teachers, and parents across British Columbia that your government's K-12 return-to-school in September plan is a failure.

While we agree that the default position should be a safe return to in-class instruction, the conflicting information, lack of flexibility, and overall poor administration of your government's plan is creating unnecessary anxiety for families throughout our province. Parents and teachers have faced unprecedented challenges to preserve and continue the education of our children in the face of this global pandemic. For households that include immune-compromised individuals and at-risk direct or extended family members, the challenges have been monumental.

To date, the NDP government's proposed solutions have offered little comfort for concerned families. By placing the onus on school districts to arrange learning plans, as well as health and safety measures, your government is creating massive disparities between school districts in terms of capacity and funding.

You have suggested that immune-compromised children and families explore homeschooling and distributed learning resources while simultaneously cutting \$12 million in funding to Independent Distributed Learning (IDL) school budgets in the middle of this pandemic. As a result, B.C. parents are receiving mixed signals and reduced options.

As it stands today, your government's current plan fails families and teachers by forcing students back into classrooms without appropriate hybrid and distance learning resources options available. Parents deserve choice, stability, and safety for their children's education.

During a virtual education town hall hosted by the Official Opposition on August 11, we heard directly from nearly 200 parents, teachers, and students about why this current plan and education model won't work for them. We heard from parents that are experiencing extensive backlogs and long waitlists as they attempt to get their children into Public Distributed Learning schools. We heard from immune-compromised individuals that are frustrated that no hybrid and distance learning resources are being made available province-wide. We heard from parents seeking greater clarity about why there is no universal mask policy for B.C. schools and classrooms. And we heard from teachers

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concerned about limited or no access to PPE for the upcoming school year.

In full consideration of the health, safety, and well-being of students and families across the province, we are calling on your Ministry of Education to take the following actions:

- Establish a viable province-wide framework that will ensure school districts can safely implement both in-class and distance learning options, and offer the same level of learning standards and opportunity for students and teachers no matter where they live, ensuring reasonable choices for parents during the pandemic.
- Implement measures that will promote greater distance learning programs and options for children in multi-generational and immune-compromised households, including restoring the \$12 million in funding removed from Independent Distributed Learning programs.
- Ensure that every child who requires an electronic device for learning can be provided with access to a laptop, tablet, or electronic device.
- Ensure that your government's plan does not fail children with diverse learning needs by creating a greater disparity between the quality and availability of learning delivery models and resources.

A viable education plan is paramount to ensure our children and families are prepared to face the challenges of COVID-19. British Columbia requires a return-to-school framework that provides parents with the ability to make responsible choices for their children's health and education. For the safety, well-being, and betterment of our children and the future of our province, we hope you will take the appropriate measures to provide B.C families with the guidance and leadership that they deserve.

Sincerely,



Andrew Wilkinson
MLA, Vancouver-Quilchena
Leader of the Official Opposition



Dan Davies
MLA, Peace River North
Official Opposition Critic for Education