



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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[via E-mail—education.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:education.minister@gov.ab.ca)

The Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister

The government's announcement of the reinstatement of limited contact tracing in its new iteration as "contact notification" is a move, albeit late, in the right direction. The Alberta Teachers' Association (Association) has been advocating for the reinstatement of testing and tracing since before the start of this school year.

Unfortunately, as government spends the next six weeks hiring and training Alberta Health Services (AHS) staff to restore the capacity lost when contact tracers were laid off prior to summer, you are expecting that teachers, and specifically school-based administrators, will simply pick up this task. This is highly problematic.

The government's current plan for "contact notification" was developed without the participation or prior notification of the Association, which is the representative of school-based administrators in Alberta's public, separate and francophone schools. This unfortunate failure to consult repeats the same mistake made in the last school year, namely, to assume that these individuals, who are already hard pressed to perform their usual duties in the midst of the pandemic, will simply be able to pick up this work.

Nonetheless, while AHS ramps up its capacity to take over contact notification, we recognize that to preserve student, staff and community safety this activity needs to begin as soon as possible and so school staff must pick up the slack. But to do so successfully, our schools and administrators will need more support.

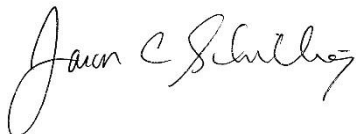
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For this reason, we are calling upon the government, school boards and superintendents, including the provincial organizations representing the latter two groups (the Alberta School Boards Association and the College of Alberta School Superintendents) to take steps to support school administrators. At minimum, this includes:

- immediately providing funding at the school level to hire staff (office administrators and substitute teachers) to take on some of the administrative load and provide relief to principals and assistant principals as they perform contact notification;
- authorizing and providing an e-mail/text template that is consistent across jurisdictions as the primary means of contact notification with telephone contact being used only when a parent cannot receive e-mail/text messages;
- establishing clear and explicit definitions of what constitutes “close contact” for the purposes of contact notification;
- providing clear policy and procedures around rapid testing that explicitly precludes and relieves school staff from responsibility for administering or supervising testing; and
- making clear in public statements and notices that abuse of school staff enforcing government and school board policy will not be tolerated.

If the government is requiring teachers and school administrators to do this additional work, the very least it can do is provide the support necessary to do it. Teachers and principals are exhausted and do not have the energy or capacity to continue to compensate or cover for the government’s inadequate pandemic response.

Sincerely



Jason Schilling
President

JCS/mm

cc Andre Tremblay, Deputy Minister, Alberta Education
Lorrie Jess, President, Alberta School Boards Association
Wilco Tymensen, President, College of Albert School Superintendents
Vivian Abboud, Executive Director, Alberta School Boards Association
David Keohane, Executive Director, College of Albert School Superintendents
bcc Provincial Executive Council
Executive Staff