

June 18, 2020

Toronto Public Health
277 Victoria Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M5B 1W2

Dear Dr. Eileen de Villa,

We greatly appreciate your efforts to keep Toronto safe and informed through your regular reports and televised announcements throughout our city's COVID-19 State of Emergency.

As Torontonians, we remain vigilant in flattening the curve, attending to work and life with care, and continuing to distance as we learn we maintain our Phase 1 status for another week.

The 11,000 Elementary Teachers of Toronto (ETT) are ever on alert to announcements, new data, statistics, and recommendations, not only out of interest, but of duty and of the responsibility we have to others, specifically the youngest and most vulnerable students in Canada's largest city.

Throughout this school year we have come to know every one of our students so well. We know them academically, socially, and developmentally. We know our buildings, our hallways, the classrooms, and the schoolyard. We know each desk, shelf, and surface. We know every stairwell and railing. We know the range of exchanges and the unique chemistry of the group we teach and what is required for their health and safety on a daily basis when they are under our care at school from the fair and buoyant days before March 13, 2020.

In the best of times, we know the choreography of the children we nurture and support. Besides their parents, we are the ones who can frame what is realistic. We can predict what can be expected of 25 kindergarteners at recess and we know how to harness the energy of 30 grade eights on a field trip.

As the school year draws to a close the template for September remains uncertain. It is our firm belief that this does not have to be the case. With the hopeful pivot from virtual to real world learning, ETT can offer the analysis needed for the safest and healthiest return that parents, students, and teachers expect.

Dr. de Villa, ETT is proposing the creation of a joint workgroup with you, Toronto Public Health, the TDSB, and teachers on the ground and the union, as the voice of educators is essential in any design for a safe and healthy return to schools and classrooms. In fact, we believe teachers are the ones who know most intimately what a safe return should look like.

Our members have concerns and recommendations around the following (short) list:

- Shared spaces
- Shared materials
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Increased human resources for cleaning

A workgroup including five ETT representatives (a teacher from each of our three divisions, from Special Education, and an ETT Executive Liaison) would create an excellent complement to the representatives from TDSB management and Toronto Public Health.

From coast-to-coast and community-to-community, local boards and health departments are making critical decisions around the safety and well-being of workers, their families, and their children. We recognize that all these forces intersect in the face of this tenacious pandemic. We are learning together about better ways to collaborate effectively for the safest outcome for the greatest number as we move from phase to phase.

ETT thanks you again for your commitment, communications, and the expertise you offer to Torontonians each day of this challenge. Our members and the public have expressed their urgency through our petition and we look forward to hearing from you on this proposal.

Petition Link: <https://www.change.org/p/toronto-public-health-include-teachers-and-the-union-in-a-joint-workgroup-to-ensure-a-safe-return-to-schools>

Solidarity and thanks,

Joy Lachica



President
Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Copy: Dr. John Malloy, TDSB Director of Education
TDSB Trustees