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**Subject:** Ontario Launches New COVID-19 Screening Tool to Help Protect Students and Staff



Newsroom

*News Release*

## **Ontario Launches New COVID-19 Screening Tool to Help Protect Students and Staff**

September 16, 2020

### **New Tool Part of the Government's Plan for the Safe Reopening of Schools**

TORONTO — The Ontario government launched a [new voluntary interactive screening tool](#) to assist parents, students and staff with the daily assessment of COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors that is required before attending school. The results will let parents, students, and education staff know whether they should attend school each day or guide at-risk individuals to proper resources. This tool is another layer of prevention that the province is using to protect the health and safety of students, staff, and the communities where they live and work.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, and Peter Bethlenfalvy, President of the Treasury Board.

"We are doing everything we can to keep students and staff safe, and that includes this new screening tool which will help people protect themselves and others from COVID-19," said Premier Ford. "It's everyone's responsibility to screen themselves or their child for symptoms before going to school. If you're sick or someone in your household is sick, even with mild symptoms, please stay home."

The new easy-to-use tool is voluntary and available for all parents, students and staff to use to help screen for symptoms of illness every day. Users will simply respond to clinician-informed symptom and risk questions, and the tool will then immediately inform users whether it is safe to attend school that day. The tool protects privacy and does not collect any personal health

information. The tool was also developed in house by the Ontario Digital Service at no additional cost to taxpayers.

"Our government is taking every preventive action to safely reopen our schools, including the introduction of Ontario's new COVID-19 screening tool for students and staff," said Minister Lecce. "We have made tremendous progress as a province, which is why we must continue to heighten our vigilance by stepping up screening of each student and staff member before they enter our schools."

Earlier this summer, Ontario unveiled the nation's most [comprehensive plan for the safe reopening of schools in September](#). The plan is supported by \$1.3 billion in critical supports to hire more teachers and increase physical distancing, purchase personal protective equipment (PPE), enhance cleaning of schools and school buses, improve ventilation, hire more custodians, and add more school leadership positions and administrative support for virtual schools. The province has also established a mandatory masking policy for grades 4-12, and a robust surveillance and testing strategy to ensure a successful return to classrooms.

In addition, local public health units have filled over 530 nursing positions, or 85 per cent, of the additional 625 nursing positions created to help keep students and staff safe. The nurses will be providing rapid-response support to schools and school boards in facilitating public health and preventative measures, including screening, testing, tracing and mitigation strategies. In order to ensure that schools are supported from the start of the school year, several public health units have temporarily redeployed existing nurses while recruitment activities continue.

As part of Ontario's commitment for transparency, and in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Digital Service, the Ministry of Education has also launched a [webpage to report COVID-19 cases in schools and child care centres](#). This page will be updated every weekday with the most up-to-date COVID-19 information available, including a summary of cases in schools and licensed child care centres and agencies. This important resource will help parents and guardians know whether a COVID-19 case has been confirmed at their children's school, and where the numbers come from.

"As students across the province return to school, it's more important than ever that we provide families with the tools and information they need to stay safe and healthy," said Minister Bethlenfalvy. "Throughout the pandemic, our government has worked swiftly to leverage technology and innovation that puts vital programs and services at your fingertips. This tool is another example of how we're building a government that works for you."

The government also released the [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) document. This guide was developed in consultation with public health experts, including Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and aims to help schools identify and isolate COVID-19 cases, reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and prevent and minimize outbreaks.

## QUICK FACTS

- Ontario has committed to making [\\$1.3 billion in COVID-19 resources available to school boards](#) in support of the COVID-19 outbreak, which includes \$381 million in federal funding to support provincial back-to-school plans and \$50 million in provincial funding for air quality and ventilation in schools.
- For September, the government has delivered over 37 million pieces of PPE to Ontario's 72 school boards and 10 education authorities, including more than 19.5 million masks, 16 million gloves, 317,000 face shields, 320,000 bottles of hand sanitizer, and 218,000 containers of disinfectant, among other critical supplies.
- The Ontario government has named [Dr. Dirk Huyer](#) as Coordinator, Provincial Outbreak Response. In this role, he will lead the province's efforts to prevent and minimize COVID-19 outbreaks in a number of sectors, including the education, child care, agriculture, and health care sectors.
- The voluntary screening tool is one of several tools Ontarians should use to stop the spread of COVID-19. Other tools include Ontario's [self-assessment tool](#), which helps people check whether they have symptoms of COVID-19, and [the COVID Alert app](#), which lets people know if they've been exposed to COVID-19—and alert others if they test positive.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.

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