

**Statement for the Ottawa Carleton District School Board**  
**July 8, 2020**  
**Submitted by Melanie Wissink (parent)**

I am the mother of a student going into SK at Kars on the Rideau.

This Spring I was working full time from home, with a very understanding employer, and caring for two small children while my partner worked outside the home. For everyone's mental health and well being, we opted out of learn from home. Learning from home does not work. We are not teachers and we have full time jobs.

Everyone, all over the country are making accommodations, being innovative and finding ways to do things differently in order to minimize risk. No part of our society is more important to open than the schools.

There are ways to make this happen, follow public health advice, keep the bubbles small and provide full time school – which is our children's right. Do the work. Take the action. Be innovative.

After giving them the information about the set up. Give teachers and parents the choice now to opt in or out based on their risk tolerance and personal vulnerability. This will also help schools know what numbers they are working with. Teachers with personal vulnerabilities can support the optional learn from home.

This needs to be about minimizing risk. Work with Public Health and find ways to make this happen – 5 days a week with smaller “bubbles”. This is essential. Think creatively and innovatively. Hire more teachers and ECEs, use community centers, libraries, gym spaces, and closed office buildings. Leverage high school space for elementary students who cannot learn independently at home and keep high school students home. Hire more custodial staff to clean throughout the day, at night and on weekends. Get more portables, and use outdoor space.

With a part time school model, children will end up in daycare if parents have the privilege of being able to find and afford it. Or they will end up with family or, neighbours. This will drastically increase the size of the “bubble” and completely negate the attempt at keeping bubbles small.

Parents who work out of the house will have to choose between working to feed their children or staying home. Low income and racialized Canadians will suffer exponentially. And these effects will be long lasting. Inequality will only increase. The stress on working parents and children will have negative mental health implications for all.

Yes this will cost money. Commit the resources. Our children are worth it.

Our children's well being, mental health and education are depending on the action and decisions you make today.

Our children will be paying back the debt our country is rightfully incurring for years. The least we could do is provide them with an education now - so they can.