

## **Hester Potts - Planning for Return to School – 9 July 2020**

I am sending you this email to express my concern over the hybrid model of learning that the Ford Government have put forward to the return to school in September.

Minister Lecce stated in his press conference at the end of June that parents want the return to school plan to be based on science. I couldn't agree more. A hybrid model where the children attend for only 2 or 3 days a week will put the children and educators at more risk. Parents need to work and will put their children in other childcare facilities for those days they are not in school. This would result in more contacts and a higher chance of spread. In addition to this, the reports out of Sick Kids Toronto and more recently out of CHEO from their medical staff should be used as a guide for the return to school. As I am sure you are aware they are both urging the government to re-open schools normally (with additional cleaning measures in place). Social distancing measures appear to be damaging to children and would be stressful on the educators. I would be supportive of a normal return to school.

On a personal level, having my children home and having to teach them 2 or 3 days a week is not an option. My husband is an essential worker in a manufacturing site. I have my own small business, a private practice where I see patients. My business was forced to close due to the lockdown period. I was home to be able to teach my children. Now that businesses are reopen I have to be seeing clients again to recover the lost income during the lockdown phase. Even if I was able to stay home, I have 3 boys who are 8, 6 and 4 years of age. Homeschooling was a challenge. My children definitely did not learn as much as they should have during this time. We completed all of the assignments, however it is just not the same as being in the school environment. It was also stressful on the family unit which is not fair for the children.

As per Ottawa Public Health's website the number of Covid cases are extremely low, zero cases reported yesterday and only 47 active cases. This has been achieved even though day care centres and other businesses have re-opened. Across Ontario and Canada the numbers are also very very low.

We cannot hide from a virus forever. The data strongly suggests that the virus is reduced and we did not overwhelm our healthcare system which was the reason the Ford government closed the schools in March - 'to protect our healthcare system'. Our children need an education. Our educators should be able to teach in their normal teaching environment.

Thank you for your time,  
Hester Potts  
Parent of 3 children attending Manotick Public School