



RNAO supports Premier Ford's announcement on schools as risk is too high

TORONTO, June 3, 2021 – RNAO is keenly aware of the importance of schools for the mental, social and physical health of children, as well as for their academic development. The pandemic has been very hard for everyone and in particular for young students and their parents. However, the risk of reopening schools for the remaining three weeks of the academic year is too high. Thus, RNAO fully supports Premier Doug Ford's June 2 decision to delay the reopening of schools for in-person classes until September.

RNAO supports the premier's decision despite recent [advice from the Science Table](#) that schools can reopen safely on a regional basis. [Many, including RNAO](#), say the Science Table's advice does not account adequately for the potential community spread and consequences of such spread. RNAO CEO Dr. Doris Grinspun wrote in her [weekend blog](#) that there is a high price to pay if we get it wrong and the reopening of schools brings about a new wave of infection and the possibility of a fourth lockdown in the summer. New variants, such as B.1.617, and other emerging variants, could potentially make vaccines less effective (see the potential for a new [variant originating in Vietnam](#)). RNAO says it is best to focus on fast-tracking the full vaccination rollout, maintaining public health measures, and taking steps to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

[RNAO supports](#) the government's phased-in Roadmap to Reopen plan, but cautions against advancing the June 14 date to move into Step One. We have suffered so long with the COVID-19 pandemic and we must [learn the lessons](#) of premature re-openings. Let's not make the same mistake.

RNAO recommends that the government immediately take the following actions:

- Prepare schools for a safe reopening in September, with investments in ventilation, required renovations to avoid crowded classrooms, and full vaccination of all staff and children 12 and older.
- Provide substantial investments in supports for disadvantaged children, special education and mental health programs.
- Provide permanent funding for the 625 public health registered nurses assigned to support schools.
- Provide funding subsidies for outdoor camps and other outdoor recreational activities for children whose families can't afford to pay. Encourage kids, including those who may not have the financial means, to safely participate in summer activities as an effective response to the mental health stress that is affecting so many children.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is the professional association representing registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students in Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has advocated for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contribution to shaping the health system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve. For more information about RNAO, visit RNAO.ca or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Marion Zych
Director of Communications
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)
Phone: 416-408-5605
Cell: 647-406-5605
mzych@RNAO.ca