

**Memorandum to:** Directors of Education  
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

**From:** Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister

**Subject:** **COVID-19: School Testing Pilot Program**

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Building off information shared in the Ministry of Education's August 3<sup>rd</sup> memo, *COVID-19: Health, Safety and Operational Guidance for Schools 2021-22*, we are writing with an update on a pilot program for COVID-19 testing initiatives that are being offered on a targeted basis to Ontario secondary schools.

### **Overview: School Testing Plan**

The government's testing strategy in schools is grounded in guidance from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and supports close collaboration between local public health units, schools, and Ontario Health. When an individual is identified as needing testing under provincial guidance, where possible, they will be offered a testing approach that is as minimally invasive as possible (e.g. nasal, mouth and saliva testing).

School Boards should be working with their local Public Health Units to ensure all students know where local testing options exist. When tests are needed, they will be made quickly accessible through multiple approaches (e.g. assessment centres and community testing sites), with a focus on reducing barriers to access and recognizing the unique needs of certain communities and geographies. Operationalizing the school testing plan could include deployment of mobile vendors to school sites and making take-home self-collection kits available in certain schools.

### **School Testing Strategy: Pilot Initiative for Targeted Ontario Schools**

Starting in September, as part of the overall school testing strategy in schools, the Ministry of Education (EDU)—in close partnership with Ontario Health, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Government and Consumer Services—will initiate a pilot program in targeted secondary schools. Through this pilot, students and staff who are vaccinated and asymptomatic will receive a take-home self-collection kit when they have been identified as a high-risk contact as part of an identified cohort or outbreak.

The pilot phase would launch the week of September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 for a total of eight weeks, ending on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The pilot project is intended for vaccinated, asymptomatic high-risk contacts (both staff/students). However, students are not required to disclose their vaccination status in order to participate in the pilot. Participation in the pilot is voluntary for staff/students.

Students, staff and families will continue to have the option to seek testing through their local assessment centre/specimen collection centre or the option to isolate.

This testing approach is in addition to locally driven testing initiatives and may be expanded throughout the school year based on uptake, effectiveness, and demand.

### **Overview of Pilot Program:**

- Take-home kits including instruction materials and a laboratory requisition will be made available by the first week of September.
- The number of kits provided to school sites will be based on an estimated 15% of secondary schools' enrolment.
- Schools will be responsible for receiving, storing, and distributing take-home self-collection kits.
- The principal (or school leader/designate) would distribute a kit to each individual in the identified class or cohort as identified and directed by local public health units.
- Take-home tests can be self-administered or administered by another person (eg. parent or caregiver) and returned to the school location.
  - Participating staff and students will have access to instructional videos on completing the take-home self-collection kit.
- Schools will be the drop-off location for completed and packaged specimens and will be provided drop-off boxes. An on-demand courier will pick up specimens from school locations. Completed and properly packaged specimens do not pose a safety risk.

### **Site Selection:**

Targeted secondary schools located in 13 public health units were identified based on local public health context, including vaccination rates and recent historical data on positivity rates.

A mix of schools was identified within 13 public health units to achieve a diverse mix of geographies and a balance of school settings (i.e., considering factors such as location, enrolment size, proximity to local testing centres). Consideration was also given to site distribution across identified school boards. These factors were considered to draw experiences and lessons learned to inform potential expansion and a broader provincial roll-out.

See Appendix for a list of targeted school boards and corresponding public health units, as well as a list of identified schools.

While this pilot initiative builds off of best practices identified through locally driven initiatives run by community partners and public health units in Toronto and Ottawa, school boards in Toronto and Ottawa are not included in the pilot to avoid duplicating services that are already being made broadly available in these regions.

### **Next Steps:**

The Ministry of Education will contact identified school boards and corresponding public health units to schedule regionally-based meetings beginning the week of August 23, 2021 to further discuss this initiative and roles and responsibilities for identified school boards.

Thank you for your partnership in implementing local testing initiatives for the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister

- c: Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
- Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
- Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
- Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
- Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
- General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
- General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
- General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
- Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
- Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
- Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
- Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
- Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
- Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
- Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario
- Liz Walker, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH)

## Appendix: Public Health Units and School Boards Identified for Pilot Inclusion

| Public Health Unit                     | School Boards  |
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| <b>CHATHAM-KENT PUBLIC HEALTH</b>      | Conseil scolaire catholique Providence<br>Lambton Kent District School Board<br>St Clair Catholic District School Board  |
| <b>DURHAM REGION HEALTH DEPARTMENT</b> | Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir<br>Conseil scolaire Viamonde<br>Durham Catholic District School Board<br>Durham District School Board<br>Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board<br>Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board |
| <b>EASTERN ONTARIO HEALTH UNIT</b>     | Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario<br>Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario<br>Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien<br>Upper Canada District School Board   |
| <b>GREY BRUCE PUBLIC HEALTH</b>        | Bluewater District School Board<br>Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board   |
| <b>HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT</b>   | Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board<br>Grand Erie District School Board   |
| <b>MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT</b>    | Conseil scolaire catholique Providence<br>Conseil scolaire Viamonde<br>London District Catholic School Board<br>Thames Valley District School Board  |
| <b>NIAGARA REGION PUBLIC HEALTH</b>    | Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir<br>District School Board of Niagara<br>Niagara Catholic District School Board  |
| <b>NORTHWESTERN HEALTH UNIT</b>        | Keewatin-Patricia District School Board<br>Kenora Catholic District School Board<br>Rainy River District School Board  |
| <b>PEEL REGION HEALTH SERVICES</b>     | Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir<br>Conseil scolaire Viamonde<br>Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board<br>Peel District School Board   |
| <b>PORCUPINE HEALTH UNIT</b>           | Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario<br>Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières   |

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|   | District School Board Ontario North East<br>Northeastern Catholic District School Board   |
| <b>THUNDER BAY DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT</b> | Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales<br>Lakehead District School Board<br>Superior-Greenstone District School Board<br>Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board |
| <b>WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH UNIT</b> | Conseil scolaire catholique Providence<br>Conseil scolaire Viamonde<br>Greater Essex County District School Board<br>Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board                         |
| <b>YORK REGION PUBLIC HEALTH</b>        | Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir<br>Conseil scolaire Viamonde<br>York Catholic District School Board<br>York Region District School Board  |

## **Appendix – Breakdown of School Sites by Board**

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| <b>Bluewater District School Board</b>                           |
| Grey Highlands Secondary School                                  |
| Peninsula Shores District School                                 |
| Georgian Bay Community School Secondary School                   |
| <b>Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board</b>    |
| Holy Trinity Catholic High School                                |
| <b>Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board</b>                 |
| Sacred Heart High School   |
| St Mary's High School  |
| <b>Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario</b>         |
| Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School                           |
| St Matthew Catholic Secondary School                             |
| St Joseph's Secondary School                                     |
| <b>Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario</b>        |
| École secondaire publique L'Héritage                             |
| École secondaire publique L'Académie de la Seigneurie            |
| <b>Conseil scolaire catholique Providence</b>                    |
| École secondaire catholique École secondaire de Pain Court       |
| École secondaire catholique École secondaire Monseigneur-Bruyère |
| École secondaire catholique l'Essor                              |
| <b>Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir</b>                     |
| ÉSC Saint-Charles-Garnier  |
| ÉSC Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf  |
| ÉSC Sainte-Famille   |
| ÉSC Renaissance  |
| <b>Conseil scolaire Viamonde</b>                                 |
| École secondaire Ronald-Marion                                   |
| École secondaire Gabriel-Dumont                                  |
| École secondaire Jeunes sans frontières                          |
| École secondaire de Lamothe-Cadillac                             |
| École secondaire Norval-Morrisseau                               |
| <b>Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario</b>          |
| École secondaire publique Echo du Nord                           |
| École secondaire Renaissance                                     |
| <b>Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien</b> |
| École secondaire catholique La Citadelle                         |

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| École secondaire catholique Le Relais                               |
| <b>Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales</b> |
| École secondaire catholique de La Vérendrye                         |
| <b>Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières</b> |
| École secondaire catholique Cité des Jeunes                         |
| École secondaire catholique Hearst                                  |
| École secondaire catholique Theriault                               |
| <b>District School Board of Niagara</b>                             |
| Beamsville District Secondary School                                |
| E L Crossley Secondary School                                       |
| Greater Fort Erie Secondary School                                  |
| <b>District School Board of Ontario North East</b>                  |
| Kapuskasung District High School                                    |
| Roland Michener Secondary School                                    |
| Timmins High and Vocational School                                  |
| <b>Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board</b>                 |
| Cardinal Ambrozic Catholic Secondary School                         |
| St Marguerite d'Youville Secondary School                           |
| St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School                                  |
| Cardinal Leger Secondary School                                     |
| St. Roch Catholic Secondary School                                  |
| St Augustine Secondary School                                       |
| Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School                                |
| St Edmund Campion Secondary School                                  |
| Robert F Hall Catholic Secondary School                             |
| Ascension of Our Lord Secondary School                              |
| Philip Pocock Catholic Secondary School                             |
| Father Michael Goetz Secondary School                               |
| St Martin Secondary School  |
| Loyola Catholic Secondary School                                    |
| St. Oscar Romero Catholic Secondary School                          |
| St Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School                                |
| Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School                           |
| St Joseph Secondary School  |
| St Marcellinus Secondary School                                     |
| <b>Durham Catholic District School Board</b>                        |
| Father Donald MacLellan Catholic Sec Sch Catholic School            |
| Archbishop Denis O'Connor Catholic High School                      |
| Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School                                |

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| <b>Durham District School Board</b>                |
| Ajax High School                                   |
| J Clarke Richardson Collegiate Institute           |
| Pickering High School                              |
| Port Perry High School                             |
| <b>Grand Erie District School Board</b>            |
| Cayuga Secondary School                            |
| McKinnon Park Secondary School                     |
| Waterford District High School                     |
| <b>Greater Essex County District School Board</b>  |
| General Amherst High School                        |
| Belle River District High School                   |
| Vincent Massey Secondary School                    |
| Western Secondary School                           |
| <b>Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board</b>   |
| Clarke High School                                 |
| Courtice Secondary School                          |
| <b>Keewatin-Patricia District School Board</b>     |
| Beaver Brae Secondary School                       |
| Dryden High School                                 |
| Red Lake District High School                      |
| <b>Kenora Catholic District School Board</b>       |
| St Thomas Aquinas High School                      |
| <b>Lakehead District School Board</b>              |
| Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute       |
| Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute       |
| <b>Lambton Kent District School Board</b>          |
| Ridgetown District High School                     |
| Tilbury District High School                       |
| London District Catholic School Board              |
| Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School               |
| Catholic Central High School                       |
| Regina Mundi College                               |
| <b>Niagara Catholic District School Board</b>      |
| Blessed Trinity Catholic Secondary School          |
| Pope Francis Catholic Secondary School             |
| <b>Northeastern Catholic District School Board</b> |
| O'Gorman High School                               |
| <b>Peel District School Board</b>                  |
| Castlebrooke SS Secondary School                   |
| Louise Arbour Secondary School                     |



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| Harold M. Brathwaite Secondary School   |
| Judith Nyman Secondary School   |
| North Park Secondary School   |
| Bramalea Secondary School   |
| Central Peel Secondary School   |
| Turner Fenton Secondary School  |
| David Suzuki Secondary School   |
| Brampton Centennial Secondary School  |
| Heart Lake Secondary School   |
| Fletcher's Meadow Secondary School  |
| Mayfield Secondary School   |
| Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School   |
| Glenforest Secondary School   |
| T. L. Kennedy Secondary School  |
| The Woodlands Secondary School  |
| Streetsville Secondary School   |
| Meadowvale Secondary School   |
| Rick Hansen Secondary School  |
| Mississauga Secondary School  |
| Applewood Heights Secondary School  |
| <b>Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board</b> |
| Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School  |
| St. Stephen Catholic Secondary School   |
| <b>Rainy River District School Board</b>  |
| Atikokan High School  |
| Fort Frances High School  |
| Rainy River High School   |
| <b>St Clair Catholic District School Board</b>  |
| Ursuline College Chatham Catholic Secondary School  |
| <b>Superior-Greenstone District School Board</b>  |
| Geraldton Composite School  |
| Marathon High School  |
| Nipigon Red Rock District High School   |
| Manitouwadge High School  |
| <b>Thames Valley District School Board</b>  |
| North Middlesex District High School  |
| Glencoe District High School  |
| Lord Dorchester Secondary School  |
| Medway High School  |
| <b>Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board</b>   |

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| St Ignatius High School                             |
| <b>Upper Canada District School Board</b>           |
| Cornwall Collegiate and Vocational School           |
| Glengarry District High School                      |
| St Lawrence Secondary School                        |
| North Dundas District High School                   |
| <b>Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board</b> |
| Holy Names Catholic High School                     |
| St Anne Secondary School                            |
| St Thomas of Villanova Secondary School             |
| <b>York Catholic District School Board</b>          |
| Sacred Heart Catholic High School                   |
| St Jean de Brebeuf Catholic High School             |
| St Elizabeth Catholic High School                   |
| Holy Cross Catholic Academy High School             |
| Father Bressani Catholic High School                |
| Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Academy High School   |
| St Joan of Arc Catholic High School                 |
| St Theresa of Lisieux Catholic High School          |
| Our Lady Queen of the World CA High School          |
| St Luke Learning Centre                             |
| <b>York Region District School Board</b>            |
| Sutton District High School                         |
| Bill Crothers Secondary School                      |
| Thornhill Secondary School                          |
| Newmarket High School                               |
| Dr John M Denison Secondary School                  |
| Emily Carr Secondary School                         |
| Tommy Douglas Secondary School                      |
| Hodan Nalayeh Secondary School                      |
| Westmount Collegiate Institute                      |
| Stephen Lewis Secondary School                      |
| Woodbridge College                                  |
| Keswick High School                                 |
| Maple High School                                   |
| King City Secondary School                          |
| Huron Heights Secondary School                      |
| Bayview Secondary School                            |
| Alexander MacKenzie High School                     |
| Langstaff Secondary School                          |

